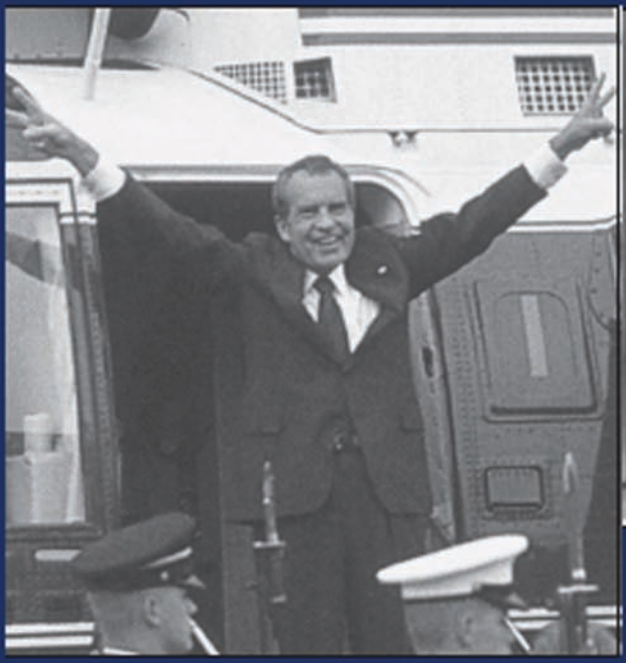
# BEFORE THE FALL



AN INSIDE VIEW
OF THE PRE-WATERGATE WHITE HOUSE

WILLIAM SAFIRE

WITH A 2005 PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

# BEFORE THE FALL

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"There has been something crude and heartless and unfeeling in our haste to succeed and be great. Our thought has been 'Let every man look out for himself, let every generation look out for itself,' while we reared giant machinery which made it impossible that any but those who stood at the levers of control should have a chance to look out for themselves. We had not forgotten our morals. We remembered well enough that we had set up a policy which was meant to serve the humblest as well as the most powerful, with an eye single to the standards of justice and fair play, and remembered it with pride. But we were very heedless and in a hurry to be great.

"We have come now to the sober second thought. The scales of heedlessness have fallen from our eyes. We have made up our minds to square every process of our national life again with the standards we so proudly set up at the beginning and have always carried at our hearts . . ."

Woodrow Wilson
Inaugural Address
March 4, 1913

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# PREFACE TO THE TRANSACTION EDITION

My life was changed in a moment of lucky hesitation.

It was the first day of spring in 1973. Despite what seemed to me to be some minor media flap during the campaign about a bizarre incident at the Watergate building, and despite the intense anti-Vietnam War passions swirling through the country, Richard Nixon had won reelection with a stunning 61 percent of the vote.

Nixon had refused to debate George McGovern, but Bob Haldeman, the White House chief of staff, had told me late in the campaign I could do a written "debate" in the *Washington Post* with McGovern's campaign manager, Frank Mankiewicz. After Nixon's landslide, conservative writers were suddenly in demand; because I had just demonstrated an aptitude for partisan columnizing, both the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* approached me with offers of a job as columnist—the most coveted assignment in journalism. I consulted Stewart Alsop, who was then writing the best column in the business for *Newsweek*. "The Graham family is wonderful to work for," Stew said, "and the *Post* is on the rise, but face it—there is only one *New York Times*."

After choosing the *Times*, I informed Haldeman, whose instant reaction was that it would be a good idea to have a friendly voice on that influential op-editorial page. He directed my fellow speechwriter, Pat Buchanan, to draft a nice note from the president to Arthur O. "Punch" Sulzberger, congratulating him on his acquisition of a contrary view for that liberal page; such a gesture would show that Nixon bore no grudge for his ill treatment by the *Times* editorialists. The chief of staff later told me that Pat drafted the letter but Nixon refused to sign it, preferring to bear his grudge.

I did want to get a traditional farewell note to grace my wall, so I wrote a letter from Nixon to me praising my selfless, dedicated service over the years. A pal of mine in his outer office signed it with the presidential autopen and got the official White House framer to frame it. With that somewhat phony souvenir in hand, I packed up a few belongings and trudged out of my office in room 123 of the Old Executive Office building and crossed the street to the West Wing to say goodbye to a few of the old Nixon hands with whom I had worked since the early '60s.

A Secret Service agent I knew was outside the door to the Oval Office. He shook my hand in farewell and said, "You want to say goodbye to the Old Man? He's inside there with his lawyer."

That's when I hesitated. If I asked to shake hands goodbye, a secretary would have knocked and poked her head in, and Nixon—who knew I intended to write a book about my dozen years through ups and downs with him—would surely wave me in and wish me well, even to work at what he liked to call "that rag." But he wasn't much at small talk, and had made clear he wasn't all that happy at my choice of future newspaper employment. So I shook my head, no, I didn't want to bother him, and kept on going to my car, turning in my parking pass at the gate.

At about that moment of that March morning, I later learned, Nixon was meeting with his counsel, John Dean, later accused of being an architect of the cover-up, who was telling him about the break-in and obstruction of justice that had become, in Dean's phrase, a "cancer on the presidency." Had I gone in, Nixon would probably have told me to listen to the lawyer's worrisome story. He might well have asked me, a former PR man, to make some suggestions about how to handle it, and perhaps to draft a statement in his style, which was my specialty. That fateful Nixon-Dean meeting, of course, was secretly taped, and whatever I would have said would have ultimately made me a grand jury witness, possibly a target of hot-eyed prosecution, and certainly a great embarrassment to the *Times*.

But I walked on past that dark confabulation and out into the sunshine of a spring day. That was some break for me, three decades ago.

In the year afterward, as the Nixon presidency was crumbling, I was getting the hang of column writing by day while writing *Before the Fall* at white heat at night. The title (conceived after the book was finished, which was soon after the Nixon presidency was also finished) was a play on the title of Arthur Miller's *After the Fall*, a play centered on Marilyn Monroe, the phrase in turn evocative of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* dealing with the fall of the angels. I liked the satanic metaphor, though Nixon's post-Watergate political demise, though accurately described by his successor as "our long national nightmare," was not quite on the scale of the banishment of Lucifer from Heaven after rebelling against God's establishment.

The book publisher, who signed up for a look inside an administration that had a full term to run, got cold feet and rejected my manuscript about the president and his men who had been run out of town. That craven bunch tried to wriggle out of the contract by calling it a mishmash, unacceptable because the volume you now hold was "no book at all." I asked my lawyer and lifelong friend, Morton Janklow, to contest the unilateral abrogation of a contract. He arranged for a prestigious and gutsier publisher, Doubleday, to bring out the book exactly as submitted, thereby demonstrating its acceptability. In mediation he won a point about the publisher-friendly "acceptability clause" that he later enshrined in future contracts to protect authors. After that experience, the brilliant and gutsy Janklow founded a literary agency that now represents many of the world's best-selling authors.

Looking back, I'm really glad I wrote *Before the Fall* while all the events were fresh in my mind and at a time when the U.S. political world was in turmoil. It has the little anecdotes, the sidelights and offbeat observations—even scrawled notes and revealing doodles snatched up after meetings—that I would surely have forgotten had this been a memoir written in much-later retrospect with all the false perspective of received wisdom. For that reason, for decades after, I have been urging White House aides, especially speechwriters, to keep little crumpled-up diary notes in the lower right hand drawer of their desks. These moments of drama, poignancy, or humor are the "footnotes to history," in Robert Louis Stevenson's phrase, that cannot be reconstructed from newspaper files or official records, and that become catnip to serious historians. That is why this book became a primary source not just to biographers and historians but to a columnist like me, triggering recollections of moments that would otherwise have receded into the mists. Those nuggets, happy or painful, can help make a point about what is happening in the latest administration.

But loyal aides ask me: What about subpoenas? Won't such scraps of paper supposedly squirreled away be ferreted out and used by investigators to get the boss in trouble? You have to use your head, I tell them; the requirement of history need not include revelations that begin "here's how we obstructed justice." Rather, "here's the way we all reacted the day all the work seemed worthwhile, or on the day the roof fell in." And as most people do not expect, presidents expect their aides to spill the beans, at least most of them. At the first meeting of Nixon's comeback crew in 1965, as recounted herein, Nixon introduced me with, "This is Safire, absolutely trustworthy, worked with us in '60. But watch what you say, he's a writer." After a couple of minutes, none of them watched what they said; later, the only complaints I heard from insiders came from those left out of moments of high drama or intriguing connivance.

I persuaded Nixon and Haldeman to let me make notes at meetings of the Cabinet, State dinners, and similar events (to which I would not be invited otherwise) without suspecting that an ever-whirring taping system was in place recording the events that this book covers. When the tapes that ensnarled Nixon were revealed at the Watergate inquiry, I decided to let what I had noted down stand; so far, no glaring discrepancies between what I scribbled in my bastard shorthand and what appeared in tape transcripts have surfaced; what you read herein was pretty much what was actually said. And because my work was outside the cover-up orbit, much of the reporting has not been covered in published transcripts, even after three decades.

How does Richard Nixon look in retrospect to historians? In general, academics—mostly liberal—consider him the most disapproved-of and most fascinating of twentieth-century presidents. With the passage of time and its inexorable lure of revisionism; with the unprecedented wealth of material that the damnable taping system offered; and especially with the recent, comparable depth of rightist antipathy to the impeached Clinton and the leftist reviling of the wartime, younger Bush—the visceral Nixon-hatred is on the wane. He is no longer the sole target of president bashing.

That's partly because Nixon's foreign policy acumen—demonstrated in détente with the Soviet Union, in the startling China opening, in the use of both of those moves to try to complete an orderly and honorable Vietnam disengagement—is seen to be buttressed by reconsideration of his progressive domestic approach. Working with governmental talents like George Shultz, Pat Moynihan, and Arthur Burns, Nixon's "bright side" presaged much of today's welfare reform, health initiatives, and environmental protection. (Even the partisan passion generated early in his career by Nixon's relentless pursuit of Alger Hiss dissipated to some extent with the conclusive revelations in KGB files of Hiss's spying.) The newest "new Nixon" is also a result of this comeback politician's second comeback; after his precipitous fall, the only U.S. president forced to resign his office refused to crawl into a hole. On the contrary, Nixon wrote his way out of disgrace: a series of serious books, mostly scrawled in longhand on his signature yellow pads, offered purposeful and understandable advice to policymakers. Not surprisingly, they reached a large general audience as well: Nixon books—pro, con, and by—have an audience. (So do plays and movies about him, but those are mostly caricatures.)

His literary output included a memoir far more interesting and profound than that of the dreary product of Johnson, Ford, Carter, the elder Bush, or Clinton. (Reagan, it turns out, could and did write well, but was no memoirist.) Were all these accounts of White House years self-serving? Of course. Still, Nixon's self-defense through policy guidance was at least meaty, equally as revealing of character and rich in detail as Truman's surprisingly solid work (the best presidential autobiography since U.S. Grant, a man of action who once observed, "I am a verb").

During that second comeback, and until his death in 1994, I covered Nixon as an occasional columnist-interviewer, unabashedly asserting my previous connection. Though some old adversaries resisted admitting him to elder-statesmanhood, most Americans accepted him as what he liked to call an "homme serieux"—a politician with no future, therefore safe to listen to for his hard-earned political sagacity. This included a yearly tour d'horizon, ranging from his long-headed views on China policy (he excused much despotism in hope of capitalism's ultimate softening), the Middle East ("we disagree about that, I know, Bill") to gun control ("Guns are an abomination—I can say that, now that I'm not running for anything"). His Super Bowl prognostications were remarkably astute because professional football, like politics, combines strategy, power, and will.

After his death, I continued these "interviews," purporting to converse with him in purgatory, where I placed him to be purged of the sin of imposing wage and price controls. Let me say this about that: I have the Nixon vocabulary and cadence down fairly well, and can guess at what he might think of current events and today's opinionmongers. That's what speechwriters are trained to do. A liberal columnist friend wrote me after one of those imaginary interviews to say he could hear Nixon's voice so well it made his flesh creep, which I took as a compliment as well as a nice play on the Committee to Re-elect the President (which Senator Bob Dole dubbed CREEP).

The alert reader will soon note that the tone of this introduction to the 2005 reissue is gentler and less angrily defensive than the introduction to the 1977 edition, which I now append. At this stage, I'm disinclined to counterattack Nixon's revilers with my hearty railings about their hypocrisy. Why? Not just because the old furies have diminished with the passage of time and the pooling of passions about past presidents; more because of the willingness of a new generation of scholars to make judgments based on an assessment of a political personage's entire life and work, including character, grit, deviousness, foresight, example, and impact.

*William Safire*

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## PREFACE TO THE 1977 EDITION

"Two wrongs make two wrongs."

So said former President Richard Nixon to interviewer David Frost in the spring of 1977, on the subject of the double standard that had been applied to his Administration compared with those of his predecessors. But, as he often used to do, Nixon was "acting against the words," in playwright Arthur Miller's phrase, trying to get across a complex message in his mind that must have gone something like this:

*I know that two wrongs don't make a right. I know I can't be excused on the grounds that "everybody did it," or at least I shouldn't overtly try to be. But shouldn't you apply the same distrust to my accusers as you apply to me? Shouldn't you try to understand that the continuance of an abuse of power is nowhere nearly as venal as the first, precedent-setting abuse of power? Shouldn't you feel guilty about your passion to punish me when you display such an unwillingness to condemn Roosevelt and Kennedy and Johnson for crimes that were even worse?*

*Before the Fall* was written in 1973 and 1974, after I had left the Nixon White House to take the post of a Washington columnist for the New York *Times*. Looking back now, we can see a time of mass hysteria, of a blood-in-the-eye, let's-get-the-bastards suspension of judgment and perspective that had not erupted since the McCarthy period. Throughout its writing, I kept trying to lean against the winds of Nixon-hatred, to suggest that there might be some extenuation in the truth about the past practices of others, some perspective in the way politics was played before everyone suddenly became aggressively Simon-pure, some balance of judgment available to those willing to apply moral fervor in a moral—that is, single-standard-bearing—way.

Not even this book's original prospective publishers were having any of that. As the national fever rose in 1973, the commercial-editorial faces at William Morrow & Co. fell—they wanted no part of a book that did not join in the general revulsion, and turned down the manuscript of *Before the Fall* on the grounds that it was "not a book." Arbitrators let me keep some part of my author's due, perhaps because the nation's largest publisher—Doubleday—accepted the

same manuscript for publication. The political courage of Doubleday editor-in-chief Stuart Richardson was a rarity in those days; the book he brought out—reprinted without a word changed here—was not censored in any way.

We now have the advantage of three years' retrospect. If we knew then what we know now, would the result have been the same?

In examining that question, a battered partisan seeking to be an understanding historian has to work his way through three reactions: anger at personal hypocrisy; fury at having been manipulated by a charge of manipulation; and a long, slow burn at the steady—and after a while, deadening—accumulation of evidence to make the case that the roots of Watergate are to be found in previous administrations. Let's take those reactions in turn.

The hypocrisy rankles. Two little-known vignettes come to mind:

—House impeachment counsel John Doar, certified media hero, wrote the condemnation of Nixon as an abuser of power, citing the "Huston plan" to repress dissidents. Did he know that someday we would find out that in September 1967, then-Assistant Attorney General John Doar wrote the infamous "Doar Plan" to infiltrate dissident groups with community service workers, which was approved unhesitatingly by civil-liberties poseur Ramsey Clark?

—The Senate Watergate Committee, its members household words all, grilled Gulf Oil lobbyist Claude Wild about illegal contributions to the Nixon campaign. As the Senators sat there carefully limiting their question areas, did they know that we would someday hear in an account quoting witness Wild that "every member of the Committee except Erwin" (who was unopposed in his state, and needed no campaign funds) was on the take secretly?

These were minor irritations, caused by—but limited to—the hypocrisy of individuals. After all, it can be argued, evil is no less evil if exposed by men who are less than pure.

The second reaction—fury at having been manipulated, especially with the irony of the charge of manipulation—goes to a more substantive matter. Nixon was driven from office on, essentially, the charge of "cover-up"—the attempt to suppress or doctor information. Lying to the American people.

Yet those in charge of the investigation, and those in the press responsible for digging out the whole truth, came up with what we now know was the partial truth about the abuse of power by the Federal government. Half the truth, in itself, would not be venal but for the fact that the investigators had the information about "the big picture"—and concealed it deliberately.

One example: William Sullivan, an embittered former high official of the FBI, provided the Senate Watergate Committee with a list of "black bag jobs" and other illegal FBI activities that took place in the sixties. The Sullivan memo included the revelation that President Johnson had used the FBI for spying on his political enemies at the 1964 Democratic Convention, and on Republican staffers in the 1968 campaign.

If released in 1973, that memo would have given pause to all those who were acting as if Richard Nixon and his men had invented political sin. But it was not released. It was placed in the committee safe, never published even in the final

report—and did not see the light of day until after Nixon's resignation. (The Watergate minority counsel kept it for publication in his own book years later.)

This was, by any definition, a "cover-up"—perhaps not with the sinister ring of "obstruction of justice," but certainly a successful effort to obstruct truth. It is one example of selective release of the facts by partisans or favor curriers who gloried in accusing the Nixon Administration of "manipulation" or "orchestration."

Where was the investigative press in all this? Caught between sources who had an object in mind—getting even with the hated Nixon—and a market of readers with one interest in mind—more fuel to feed the firestorm of protest against a White House cabal.

The deliberate cover-up of the precedents for Watergate did not come about as a result of any liberal establishment conspiracy. To most, it seemed like the right thing to do at the time: any examination of previous power abuses was seen as an attempt to exonerate the Nixon abuses, to play into the hands of the cynical "everybody did it" crowd. The good end (of punishing wrongdoing Nixonites) justified the investigators' means (of denying to the public the information it would ordinarily have the right to know). This might have come with better grace had investigative zealots not been castigating their targets as those who put the ends of national security ahead of the means of protecting constitutional liberties.

It should be noted at this point (or at this time, but never at this point in time) that a handful of genuine civil libertarians did resist the hysteria. Men long scorned by the Nixonites—Nat Hentoff, Murray Kempton, Milton Viorst, Nicholas Von Hoffman—whose own longstanding anti-Nixon credentials were in good order, expressed concern about the anti-libertarian way the self-described civil libertarians were going after the power abusers.

Not by orchestration, then, but in cacophonic concert, public opinion was channeled toward the goal of bringing down the President. Most reporters did not dig for precedents, because editors felt readers were not interested; the sources who did know the whole truth chose to conceal what they knew either for partisan reasons or because they did not want to appear on the side of the "black hats." Ye shall know the half-truth, the sources seemed to say, and the half-truth shall make you free.

The third reaction came more than a year after Nixon's fall, as a mountain of evidence accumulated about the Watergate precedents in earlier administrations. The effect was numbing; most people had had enough of revelations of chicanery at the highest level, and did not want to hear more. Especially since it put to the fire the clay feet of old idols.

The post-Watergate revelations that did so much to explain Watergate were begun by reporter Seymour Hersh, of the New York *Times*, who first wrote of the massive intrusion on the lives of American citizens by the Central Intelligence Agency. This triggered an investigation by a Presidential commission, which shied away from the dirtiest of dirty tricks (assassination attempts on foreign leaders) and in turn led to a Senatorial investigation.

But when Democrats investigate Democrats, the results are not as dramatic—or presented in as horrified a fashion—as when Democrats investigate Republicans. Friends of the late John Kennedy came across evidence of a tie between the late President and the moll of a Mafia chieftain (who happened to be the same hoodlum assigned by the CIA to murder Fidel Castro); this startling White House-Mafia link was discreetly buried in a footnote of a report, almost escaping notice.

But the momentum of the investigation, and the laudable perseverance of portions of the press, pushed the reluctant probers into disgorging episodes in the past that far exceeded—in scope as well as venality—any that so recently shocked the nation.

The most vivid example of Watergate roots was the 1962-65 wiretapping, blackmail, and harassment of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. The original tap was authorized in writing by Attorney General Robert Kennedy; it was carried on into the Johnson Administration with the tacit approval of Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach; it resulted in thousands of telephone interceptions, the invasion of privacy of hundreds of unsuspecting and unsuspected Americans—all having nothing to do with national security. In the additional surveillance this tapping spawned, Dr. King and his wife were harassed and threatened, and blackmailing eavesdroppers tried to break up their marriage.

All this and more was done by the "good guys," many of whom came before committees (but not on television, as the Nixon men were forced to) to blandly explain how they could not remember those events of the distant past. Mrs. King never sued.

Of course, some of the Congressional "good guys," who preened before the cameras during the Second McCarthy Era of 1973-74, turned out to be the targets of an investigation in 1977. The Koreagate scandal, if properly and vigorously pursued, might discover scores of veteran congressmen on the take—illegally, in direct defiance of Article II of the Constitution—and we shall see where that leads. Even if the self-searching ardor diminishes, we know that some of the legislators loudest in their excoriation of executive venality were pocketing envelopes or being entertained in the grand Agnew tradition.

Which brings us back to the first reaction again, with some of the heat taken out of one's sense of indignation. Perhaps, as Jimmy Carter and other leaders before him have suggested, we would be better off to condemn the sin and not the sinner. In that more charitable mood, and with justice something to be done with sadness rather than lip-smacking vengeance, we can address the question: If we knew then what we know now, would the result have been the same? Knowing that Nixon and his men lied no more than his predecessors; knowing he invaded privacy and abused the intelligence power less than the masters of the Kennedy and Johnson years; and knowing that many of his accusers were draping themselves in a phony cloak of public morality—with that amelioration, with that perspective, would Nixon have been driven out of office?

Of course he would. Not only that, it was right—both morally and practically—for him to have been forced to resign. If the tapes had been running in the

White House of Franklin Roosevelt—and some episode had made them available for inspection—he, too, would have been on the brink of impeachment.

The reason is that hard evidence of lawbreaking by men in power cannot be blinked away when it is forced into public view. When Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor of England in 1620, was charged with taking money from parties in suits before him, he could not defend himself on the ground that such pocket-lining had been customary for judges of the realm for centuries. It was wrong; he knew it; its previous tolerance offered no protection. Bacon was jailed for four days and then pardoned.

In the same way, the multi-Administration wiretapping, the tradition of "bag jobs" done by the FBI and later assigned to a White House group, the transgressions on individual rights that gathered force over four decades—all these, when exposed by the flipping-over of the fiat rock called Watergate, required expiation. The ones who were caught had to pay, and there were both graveyards and a statute of limitations protecting those who did not get caught in the past.

Richard Nixon will be remembered, as Lord Bacon is, for having been the man in charge when the rules were rightly applied. Nixon's hand-fashioned noose, correctly labeled herein "the goddam tapes," made it possible to change the corrupt toleration of the breaking of those rules; ironically, it was the blundering way Nixon handled the cover-up that will be seen as his great, if unwitting, contribution to the cause of civil liberty.

Nixon's fall was the stuff of history, and will be the subject of historical analysis, revisionism, and re-revisionism for as long as the republic survives. The attacks on him were surely unfair, but the result was surely not unjust. The question is not "Is the President above the law?" (as Lincoln showed, in some situations, he definitely is, and put there by the law) but "Is this President, in this circumstance, justified in stretching the law this far—and has he given us proof of what he did?"

Richard Nixon erred, no more than several predecessors, but then compounded his error again and again, each misstep on inexorably grinding wheels of tape, and so he must bear his disgrace. After the fall, he went to work on his oral and written history, and—one hopes—will justify some of his ways to his countrymen.

But what of the time before the fall? The villains now ten feet tall were then only normal-size staffers who thought they were on their way to a place in history rather than a place in jail. The best metaphor in this book likens the pre-Watergate years to an old movie in which all the bit players later became stars.

Seems like ancient history now, but a look at the dreams and the practices of Richard Nixon and his men as they were riding high—and doing much good, too hurriedly forgotten—can be instructive to the students of power of today and the brokers of power of tomorrow. In the years that now separate us from the first Nixon term, some of us have felt the frustration and outrage described in this introduction, but must grimly agree with the man who once led this nation: two wrongs—or two thousand wrongs done under two previous Presidents—do not make a wrong right.

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# BEFORE THE FALL

*An Inside View of the Pre-Watergate White House*

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# PROLOGUE

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# PROLOGUE

I first met Richard Nixon in a kitchen in Moscow.

It was "my" kitchen; that is, I was the press agent representing the homebuilder who put up the "typical American house"—then $11,000, plus cost of land—at the American Exhibition in Moscow in 1959. Nikita Khrushchev was being shown around the exhibition by his host, the American Vice President, who was nervously trying to be genial, and the tour was happily disorganized: the two men were wandering around like a couple of politicians at a county fair, stumbled after by the world press corps.

At the RCA color television exhibit, Khrushchev took the opportunity to launch a debate, taunting the Vice President about American consumer gimmickry and aggressive foreign policy. Nixon, the host, was taken aback: he continued to be Mr. Nice Guy as the color tape rolled for rebroadcast back in the United States. Khrushchev clobbered him; Nixon kept trying to placate his guest, but the Russian leader had the upper hand all the way. Because the Vice President was not being the gutfighter people expected him to be, but was being his naturally diplomatic, courteous self on a trip abroad, Nixon's reputation for being a tough bargainer who could "stand up to the Russians" was in danger of being forever dissipated in those twenty minutes of TV debate. Nixon came out of the TV studio sweating profusely, knowing he had "lost," and anxious to find a way to make a comeback.

I slipped out of the control room, went over to my exhibit—which *Pravda* had labeled the "Taj Mahal," because the Soviets could not admit a U.S. tract house was affordable by the average American worker—looped a chain around the fence and the rear bumper of a jeep, and pulled down the fence. There was now no control at all to whatever tour had been planned; to Major Don Hughes, Nixon's military aide, I yelled, "This way to the typical American house!" In a fluid crowd situation like that, any authoritative voice is followed, and Hughes led Nixon, who in turn led Khrushchev, Mikoyan, and Voroshilov over the pulled-down fence into the "typical American house." They all shook hands with my thunderstruck

client, Mr. Herbert Sadkin of All-State Properties, Inc., in the walkway carved through the middle of the house, which had been dubbed the "splitnik" because it had been split apart to let crowds walk through. At my signal, a Russian-speaking American guide permitted a crowd of Soviet fairgoers to pour in from the opposite direction: with the crowd of reporters pushing behind the politicians, Nixon and Khrushchev were effectively trapped in the house.

Comprehension of the situation, and the opportunity it offered for a comeback in debate, dawned on the face of the Vice President. He took Khrushchev by the arm and steered him to the railing of the walkway where they could lean into the kitchen. The reporters formed a semicircle behind them, and the "kitchen conference" began between a couple of evenly matched contenders.

Nixon was superb. I was in the kitchen with the woman demonstrator of the equipment, and had the perfect view; listening to the firm, intelligent, nonbelligerent way the American Vice President was handling the blustering Soviet General Secretary made me proud to be on the right side. The problem was this: hardly anybody else could see or hear.

Harrison Salisbury of the New York *Times*, who spoke Russian and could take the pool notes for the press corps, was climbing through the walkway rail into the kitchen; as a Russian guard started to move to stop him, I explained he was the refrigerator demonstrator and the guard hesitated long enough for Salisbury to squeeze in. When I tried the same thing for the AP photographer, holding him out to be the demonstrator for the automatic garbage disposal unit, the guard said, "Which unit is that?" and I was stuck—it was a cheap house, there was no such unit—and the photographer, in desperation, lobbed his Speed Graphic over the heads of Nixon and Khrushchev into the kitchen. I caught it, pushed a button, and lobbed it back; it promptly came back to me, reset, with the screamed imprecation "You had your hand over the aperture, you idiot!" When I tried to compose my picture again, getting in Nixon, Khrushchev, and the washing machine (I was, after all, publicizing the house and its equipment) some bulky Russian bureaucrat that nobody ever heard of had pushed his way through to the front, messing up the three-element composition—there was no way to get the washing machine in without including the damn bureaucrat. I shot the picture again anyway, as Nixon was making a stern gesture tapping the edge of one hand into the other hand's palm, catching Khrushchev looking nonplussed (and the damn bureaucrat with his eyes closed, served him right). I lobbed the AP camera back, narrowly missing the Soviet leader, who was trying to dominate Nixon but kept getting distracted with cameras whizzing past his head, and the AP wirephoto made just about every front page in the world. It is included in this book as Plate 1 following page 56.

Better still, a real photographer, Elliot Erwitt of Magnum Photos, made it into the kitchen later, taking a shot of Nixon jabbing a finger in Khrushchev's chest. The Russians had embargoed photos for a time after that

AP photo was sent showing their man getting the worse of the debate, so I smuggled the negative out of Moscow in my socks the next day; in repayment, Erwitt took a picture of the press agent at work in the kitchen.

With all this going on, I could only listen to snatches of the debate. From the room next to the kitchen, my homebuilder client stage-whispered, "What's he saying?" I listened for a minute to the translation of Khrushchev's riposte, stage-whispering back, "He says, 'You may be my guest, but truth is my mother'—it's an old Russian proverb." "That's no old proverb, he just made it up!" "Look, I only handle your publicity, not his."

Salisbury's notes, which he read to his confrères after the leaders moved on, showed Nixon to have handled the debate with dignity as well as tough-mindedness. When Khrushchev fulminated about American citizens having "the right to buy this house, or to sleep on the pavement at night —and you say we are slaves of Communism!" Nixon came back with a defense of the variety offered by the free enterprise system: "To us, diversity, the right to choose, the fact that we have a thousand different builders, that's the spice of life. We don't want to have a decision made at the top by one government official saying that we will have one type of house. That's the difference . . ." Khrushchev, who was using his temper skillfully, saw that Nixon could out-pious him in the don't-threaten-us department, and backed off; he was impressed with Nixon, and later told Mike Wallace of CBS that he had done all he could to help bring about Nixon's political defeat in 1960.

After the reporters and the crowd had left the house, I went back to the now-historic kitchen, opened the refrigerator, took out a beer and sat down on the range to think things over. I decided to go to work for Nixon, if I could; he didn't get upset when he was caught off guard, he knew how to seize an opportunity, he obviously had respect for—and knew how to play to—the press, he had a sure grasp of issues, and, cornball though it sounds, he made me feel proud of my country. He'd be a good President. I toasted his future and mine with warm beer; I had forgotten to hook up the refrigerator.

That night, at the American Embassy reception, Nixon had a few shots of vodka and loosened up, which I thought showed him to be not as stiff and plastic as reputed; when I introduced myself, he came right to my point with "We really put your kitchen on the map, didn't we?" The man understood self-interest. The episode that day was instructive about public-opinion formation, too. When the story of the kitchen conference was reported in the States, accompanied by the still pictures showing Nixon dominant, the impression was created that Nixon "won." Later, when the television tape of the color-studio debate was played—the first debate, which Nixon really "lost"—the impression did not change. People viewed the TV debate with the mental set that the American Vice President "stood up to the Russians" and the sight of him kowtowing did not cause them to waver. That meant that the writing press would remain important

in the coming Age of Television, influencing viewers' opinions of what they saw. Something to remember. Something that Nixon never agreed with, either. "What's on the tube is what counts," he would say. "I've never been able to get anybody in my press operation who understood the power of television."

Six years later, as a private citizen who had been beaten to a political pulp in two elections, Nixon returned to Moscow as lawyer for John Shaheen's oil companies. A Canadian newsman slipped him the fallen Khrushchev's home address; Nixon rose from the dinner table where two Soviet Intourist guides had been assigned to stay with him, asked directions to the men's room, left the restaurant and took a cab to Khrushchev's apartment house, where he was met by two stone-faced, burly women who insisted Khrushchev was not there. Nixon pressed and got nowhere. Frustrated, he left a handwritten letter expressing the hope they could meet and talk again. The note was probably never delivered. If not destroyed, it may be the most interesting document in the Kremlin's file on Richard Nixon.

Seven years after that nonmeeting between nonpersons, Nixon returned to Moscow; this time I came along as Special Assistant to the President of the United States, the ringing title given to senior speechwriters. Times had changed. Nixon was the American President, a recent visitor to Peking where he had skillfully exploited the differences in the Communist world, the man who had reacted to the North Vietnamese last-ditch attempt at victory by mining Haiphong harbor, and in so doing had shown the Soviets that he knew they needed the summit more than he did.

When the Russian leader Nixon was dealing with first walked into the room, I recognized him. Leonid I. Brezhnev was the "damn bureaucrat" whose name nobody knew in 1959, who had elbowed his way into the picture and later pushed his way to the top of the Kremlin hierarchy.

Moscow is used in this prologue as a prism through which we can look at several Nixons: loser, loner, winner, leader, a fighter like Henry Armstrong or Tony Zale, always boring in, always coming back, always seeming as out of date as a metaphor about two long-forgotten middleweights. The fact is, Nixon has been on the national scene longer than any American politician in our history. Franklin D. Roosevelt ran on a major-party national ticket five times (including a Vice Presidential try in 1920); Nixon was the only other American who has matched that, and, like FDR, he won four out of five. He came back again and again. He almost survived.

If you are in your mid-forties, you have been for or against Richard Nixon in national elections, with only one exception, ever since you have been able to vote. He is part of you: a backboard, a mirror, a stimulant, a palliative, an object of your hate or adoration, your grudging respect or mild distaste, but like it or not he is a presence, the presence of the adult postwar generation.

This book is mainly about the active Presidency of Richard Nixon, be-

fore the fall; at times it will seem like watching an old movie in which many of the bit players later became stars. By coincidence, the day I left my office in the Executive Office Building happened to be March 21, 1973, the day that John Dean was making his revelations to the President; I recall passing the President's office, wondering if I should stop in to say goodbye, and thinking to hell with it, he was busy and did not care all that much about the departure of one speechwriter.

On political issues and philosophy, we see eye to eye about a great many things, giving much of what I recount here a pro-Nixon "tilt." He is a man worthy of respect, what he likes to call an *homme sérieux*, and yet he is a man deserving of anger, too, for betraying some of the best qualities in himself, a leader magnificent in defeat and vindictive in victory.

In this memoir, which is neither a biography of him nor an autobiography of me nor a narrative history of our times, there is an attempt to figure out what was good and bad about him, what he was trying to do and how well he succeeded, how he used and affected some of the people around him, and an effort not to lose sight of all that went right in examining what went wrong.

Here is the plan of the book. ("Game plan," a phrase that sportscaster Frank Gifford recalls was coined by Coach Vince Lombardi in the Fifties, was frequently used by President Nixon at meetings of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Policy—"Cabcomecopol," to the cognoscenti—and was picked up by economist Paul McCracken to describe the Administration's economic strategy. Bob Haldeman insisted on "game plans" from Jeb Magruder on everything from publicizing a speech to putting together a clipping book, until the President struck it out of a speech draft, with the admonition to me: "Don't use clichés.")

Through each of the ten sections run three strains: the President, the Partisan, the Person, ways of coming at part of the history of our own times through some facets of the man at the center.

As President, Nixon ended the war in Vietnam the way he always intended to—with "honor," that word that sent chalk-squeaking shivers up so many spines—and daringly and realistically reshaped American foreign policy. When history's jury comes in, he may well be best remembered for laying the foundation for what Nehru called "a generation of peace." In economics, the best advice he could muster could not solve the problem of getting inflation and unemployment down at the same time. In race relations, he at first tried to do the right thing but wound up doing the popular thing, which was not always the wrong thing. In returning "power to the people" he did more than he was credited with in decentralizing administrative control, though most of the power he sent out of Washington was snatched from the Congress, and not from the still-growing Executive Branch.

As a partisan, he had a heart too soon made cold, a head too soon made hot. But he was not, as he was widely thought to be, a party partisan; he sought a new alignment across party lines to shape a new majority, suc-

ceeded dramatically, and in the success tolerated the hatred and excess that corrupted his re-election and canceled his mandate, causing the Nixon Landslide to land on top of Nixon.

As a person, Richard Nixon is an amalgam of Woodrow Wilson, Niccolò Machiavelli, Teddy Roosevelt, and Shakespeare's Cassius, an idealistic conniver evoking the strenuous life while he thinks too much. Everybody who writes a book centering on Nixon turns amateur psychoanalyst, as I do infrequently, but at least I have been there with pencil in hand a few times when he was rambling along on the couch. The contribution this book seeks to make to the understanding of this man, who understands himself to be somebody else in public than in private, is in the true reports of revealing conversations. Does he enjoy campaigning? "It's something to get through." What motivates most people? "People react to fear, not love—they don't teach that in Sunday School, but it's true." What is it he likes about the business he is in? "Politics is poetry, not prose." An unexpected man. A presence.

About credibility. Whether the reader believes what the book says or not is less important than whether it will help him work out the truth, or as much of an understanding of the situation to be adjudged the whole truth. The us-against-them theme, a conscious effort to explain the reason for some of the excesses, appears in this work unconsciously as well: "critics" and "detractors" are quoted and "supporters" and "defenders" combat them. The controversy that Nixon sought (labeled "polarization" by those who sneered at Lyndon Johnson's stultifying attempts at "consensus") permeates an attempt to understand what was going on—to the extent that even this sentence contains a gratuitous shot at "those who."

The cheap ticket to credibility is phony balance: the generous concession, the open admission of error on minor points, lending credence to a defense of the important matters. Balance is not the author's aim, nor is credibility, nor is persuasion: in the year and a half since leaving the White House, just before the storm broke, I have been trying to figure this thing out for myself, and the only way to do that is to explain the way it was in context, neither in defense nor denunciation. If it helps the reader as well as the writer get a handle on the whys of Watergate it will be useful. Perhaps judgments of Nixon should not be "balanced." Should a baseball slugger who is thrown out at home be denied credit for hitting a triple? Will a "distant replay" show him to have been safe at home after all? The great danger in judging Nixon is to say "on the whole . . ." because he is neither pretty good nor pretty bad, his record not near-failure nor near-great. Nixon is both great and mean, bold and vacillating, with large blind spots in a remarkable farsightedness, and balanced judgments must give way to split decisions. He may be the only genuinely tragic hero in our history, his ruination caused by the flaws in his own character.

Such are the general guidelines of this book. (Working on an economic speech: "Mr. President, FDR once used the word 'yardsticks' in this regard." "Well, float out 'yardsticks,' Bill—and if it doesn't go, the hell with

it, use 'guidelines.'") I hope to hang loose, not get overly mechanistic about the sequence of some events, and let the coverage of some themes move back and forth through time.

It is hard for me to realize this, but I have come to the point in life—and to the job in journalism—where, for the first time, I do not have anything to sell. So I Am a Camera, I am telling it like it was, or as nineteenth-century historian Leopold von Ranke put it, "wie es eigentlich gewesen war," how it actually happened. From time to time phrases like that will stud this book to lend sophistication and cachet and to reinforce Henry Kissinger's mistaken notion that I can read German.

Nothing could be more misleading, however, than to rely on the ultimate revelation of all the facts in deciding "how it actually happened," for the men on the scene at the time did not have all the facts, and an important part of what happened occurred because of what *seemed* to be happening. A man who lies, thinking it is the truth, is an honest man, and a man who tells the truth, believing it to be a lie, is a liar. (And even a profundity can be shallow.)

There is a serious purpose in any man's attempt to think through what he has been through, and to report what may be of service to the reader looking for clues toward an understanding of the past five years, but I do not intend to get solemn about it. Haldeman told me in 1968: "You'll be good for us, we're too stiff. I can't remember a joke. I try; I used to be a salesman, I needed jokes, but they would fly right out of my head. A lot of fascinating stuff goes on around here, funny stuff too, and it's lost forever —I only wish I could figure out a way to get it all down." (Oh, did he find a way.) A man wrote Leonard Garment a letter in early 1972 suggesting we give the lie to the rumors being spread by Nixon-haters in 1970 that the Nixon people were planning some kind of Nazi-style putsch, and of course those rumors evaporated as election time approached; Len forwarded it to me with a puckish "Sounds like a good idea to nail this lie—or were we really planning a putsch?" The President to Steve Bull, who had an unwanted politician waiting on the telephone: "Tell him—tell him you can't find me." Julie Eisenhower: "He does not get angry, or blow up, or anything like you read about him. Of course, there was the time when Mother dropped the bowling ball on his toe . . ." And Haldeman of martinet repute recommending a diet of tomato juice with a raw egg in it, with Pat Moynihan adding, "And it makes you act like a sonofabitch for eight hours."

Which brings me to the people around Nixon.

The company a President keeps reveals a good deal about himself, his political techniques, and his Presidency. The men around Nixon at the start were chosen by him to communicate with the powers who could have vetoed his nomination: the center of the Republican Party, wondering if that old slogan that killed Henry Clay, "Clay Can't Win," could be affixed to Richard Nixon. To overcome that fear, Nixon had to warm up to—or

at least not offend—many of the people who mistrusted him most in the past. Liberal Kansas Congressman Bob Ellsworth and New York *Herald Tribune* editorial writer Ray Price and liberal Democrat law partner Len Garment made the scene; then, when hard delegate-hunting became the primary need, John Mitchell and Richard Kleindienst surfaced.

Mitchell was reflective of the good and bad in Nixon, and the rise and fall of that oddly romantic, loyal, and benumbed man is chronicled here; as in every case, the sketch is less of the aide than of the aide's effect on, or use by, Richard Nixon. Henry Kissinger is shown here to be an extension of Nixon's mind, and a fierce reinforcer of Nixon's penchant for secrecy, since the "bold stroke" and the leapfrog technique were the essence of the Nixon way of working. "Henry plays a hard game," Nixon once said, with admiration in his voice, because that is the kind of game Nixon liked to play himself, most often through others.

John Connally whistles through here like a Richard Cory, the "top Democrat" Nixon always wanted and could not get (Senator Henry Jackson was offered the Defense post and Hubert Humphrey the UN), exemplar of the man Nixon sometimes wishes he could be. "Every Cabinet should have a future President in it," Nixon told Ehrlichman—as he plucked Connally out of the Texas air, and later chose Elliot Richardson.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan was described by economic adviser Herbert Stein as the "Herbert Hoover of the Harding Cabinet," in the sense that he offered freshness and vitality to a seemingly gray group of men (as Hoover did, in the early Twenties, going on to a change of reputation to dourness later). Nobody, not even cagey, courtly Bryce Harlow, had the self-knowledge Moynihan had: "My half-life will last only until Ehrlichman discovers the Bureau of the Budget and Haldeman produces a telephone directory." Moynihan was an oddity, a concession Nixon made to his own facet of anti-establishment imagination, a flatterer nearly as skillful as Kissinger, a sad wit, an affirmative human being, a ray of hope who knew when to turn himself off and on.

Though Nixon admired and respected Arthur Burns, who was probably his most significant appointment in the long run, he was often annoyed and impatient with the Vermonter's slow, didactic style; with George Shultz, Nixon showed he could adapt to a strong and independent mind who could adapt to Nixon's style. Shultz was the Cabinet member Nixon knew least at the start, but he trusted Arthur Burns's judgment about Shultz, and ol' George lasted the longest of the originals. Shultz was and is a good man, of profound intellect and character, the best of all the Nixon men, a credit to the President who brought him forward and proof that a system does not corrupt an incorruptible man.

Ehrlichman came in as an arrogant man who had the appearance of a good man, and left as a better man with the appearance of an arrogant man. More than any of the men in close, he was a product of Nixon's, and worth observing in studying Nixon's creations. His doodles kept his interest from flagging in many a dull meeting, and a couple of them help en-

liven this book (as do the powerful abstractions of Elliot Richardson that tell you much about that frequently appointed gentleman, too. "Think of the pressure," Richardson's daughter once said, "only three years to go, and eight more Cabinet posts to fill.").

Doodles remind me of Haldeman. There is the man whose relationship with his President was similar in a way to that of Cathy and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*—Cathy insisted she was not so much in love with Heathcliff, as she *was* Heathcliff—so too did Haldeman see his identity merged with Nixon's. But Haldeman would show what Nixon could conceal. Haldeman could be cruel in person as Nixon could be cruel in the abstract; Haldeman was the one who humiliated Ron Ziegler at meetings with his peers (not until 1973 did Nixon blow up at Ziegler with a shove in public, but that was at a time of great stress). Haldeman was known for his caution—when I asked what the President was currently reading, he would answer with another question, what books did I recommend the President read?—but Bob could also be sensitive and self-mocking, as was Nixon, which brings up the doodles.

"I'm writing this book, sympathetic but not sycophantic," I told him in early 1973. I wanted examples of personal notes the President had written in his own hand, and the permission to use them. But I have to tell you there will be whole chunks of this book the President is not going to like one bit."

"No sweat," Haldeman said. "Adds credibility. The Boss says to cooperate, and he doesn't expect a puff piece, you've disagreed with a lot of stuff along the way. That's what he says now," Haldeman smiled, "but wait'll he reads it—he'll go through the roof."

"Ehrlichman and Richardson gave me their doodles," I began, "which is a kind of interesting way to break things up."

"I know what you're getting at," Haldeman said. "The President does not doodle." My crest fell, and Haldeman nibbled his pencil for a moment. Then he looked at me with a humorously evil expression that spoke volumes about his understanding of image merchants in the throes of manipulation: "*Should* the President doodle?"

The information that I was authoring came as no surprise because when you've written one book, everybody you deal with in politics knows you're going to write another. This has an effect on how closely you are drawn into an inner circle, but Nixon was curiously trusting about what he said with a man in the corner writing it all down, and later I discovered that after 1970 a more trustworthy recorder than me was quietly spinning in the Signal Corps facility in the basement of the Executive Office Building. (Every Christmas, corpsmen in those corridors would build a cardboard-and-cotton Santa Claus, hang it on the door, fix it to an electric eye and boom out a recording of "Merry Christmas! Ho-ho-ho!" to terrified passersby.) I worked with a pencil and a shorthand of my own, never surrepti-

tiously—if Richard Nixon did not want me there to write it all down, he didn't invite me in.

So there are great gaps. I would like to have been able to write firsthand about the handling of the Jordanian crisis, when Syrian tanks rolled across the border to support the Palestinian Arabs in the overthrow of King Hussein, evoking a classic in American diplomatic response—flexing muscles, using Israel, blocking the Soviets, stopping a small war without getting into a big one, but not letting our ally lose—that was Nixon at his best, and I missed it all. The Arab-Israeli war of 1973 took place after I left the White House and I will not pretend to be an insider on that.

Nixon at his worst could have been observed aboard the yacht *Sequoia*, at the time of G. Harrold Carswell's rejection by the Senate, where three men sat around "rubbing each other's sores," in Nixon's too-vivid figure of speech, and working up a rage that the President permitted to explode the next day. But the author wasn't there either.

And I write about China with all the perspective and insight that comes from a member of the staff who was left behind. I really cannot complain about that: Nixon fairly rotated his three senior writers on major trips, and I went on more than my share. Pat Buchanan drew the Peking assignment, since it was felt that a right-winger might best be along to dampen down the conservative reaction. That did not work with columnist William Buckley, who denounced the dealings with the Red Chinese throughout: that sparkling writer did not appreciate it when Bob Haldeman ran into him at a souvenir store in Peking and sweetly inquired, "Doing a little trading with the enemy, Bill?" But I could not ignore the historic China initiative, and so pass along the President's report to the Cabinet afterward verbatim—along with a provocative thought or two about how the Chinese dealings in 1971 affected the Nixon-Kissinger lust for, and sometimes necessary insistence on, secrecy.

Moynihan wrote a book about welfare reform, and John Newhouse a book about the SALT negotiations, absolving me of the need to go into those subjects in detail, and if I can find somebody on whom to unburden reams of dull notes on economic policy, there will be a book on that someday. Not by me.

After the flood of Watergate books, there should be plenty of "inside" books about the Nixon years, and many will be able to be more accurate and detailed than the literature of previous Administrations, for several reasons: the assignment of aides to write "memos for the President's file" on nearly every meeting—though Bill Rogers once cautioned, "The one who writes the notes makes his Boss look like a genius and the other guy look like a plunk"—and, of course, the goddam tapes.

Of course, no book has ever been produced on any Presidency as revealing and as damaging as the Nixon transcripts covering the period in the spring of 1973 when he was scurrying around to find his way out of the Watergate maze. That was Nixon at his weakest, showing his dependency on Haldeman and Ehrlichman, his disloyalty to Colson, his personal

squeamishness in not facing up to John Mitchell himself, his moral blindspot on the subject of eavesdropping. In trying to prove himself innocent of knowledge of the break-in and cover-up of Watergate, Nixon ultimately proved his own willingness to put image ahead of reality, his personal interest ahead of the national interest.

Those transcripts show Nixon's dark side. That side of Nixon was not a surprise to his long-time associates, as much of the material in this book about his feelings about the press indicates, but other facets reassured his friends that the whole man was nobly motivated by what he thought was best for his country. The Nixon of the transcripts was no more the "real" Nixon than the Nixon of the campaign documentary.

This book does not draw on the tapes, because those transcriptions are widely available, and there will be plenty of opportunity to hash them over in other histories. Nobody who worked with Nixon can read most of those tape transcripts without a sinking, disgusted feeling: sometimes they show Nixon to be, in his own words, a "dumb turkey"; at other times a vacillating, abandoned man, and then mean-spirited and vengeful. They show Nixon at his worst (except for that strain of loyalty and compassion that should not always be taken as venal), and the quotes that were immortalized at the conspiracy trial of his aides after his resignation and pardon—showing an arsenal of "smoking guns" which would surely have impeached, indicted and convicted him—are the worst of the worst. To Nixon-haters, Nixon at his worst is ambrosia; to anybody who wants to understand the man and his times, Nixon's dark side is by no means his only side.

What a good idea the goddam tapes must have seemed to be; in Nixon's old age, he could relive every glorious moment, write history as nobody could before—how Churchill would have envied him. And what a terrible idea it was—betraying the confidences of his associates, prolonging Watergate, thrusting the nation into Constitutional conflict—and for what? He was not too lazy to dictate a diary, as the chapter herein about a visit to the Lincoln Memorial shows, yet he wanted to hypnotize historians with the great events he was shaping in a way in which they could not refuse to believe.

The President's decision to tape-record meetings secretly—part of his casual attitude about eavesdropping generally—affects this book in this way: I am under pressure to report with terminological exactitude, uncomfortable or awkward as that may be at times. I often would have liked, as a good ghost is trained to do, to have been able to clean up and straighten out some of the language.

I was formerly an advocate; the pejorative term is "apologist." I do not apologize for having been an apologist. My job and my calling, as I saw it, was first to help refine a point of view, to fit into a framework, making allowances for political compromise; then to clothe that point of view in the most dramatic and persuasive words that came to mind; and then to help promote, project, and advance the man and the Administration that I was a proud part of.

To "know your place" is a good idea in politics. That is not to say "stay in your place" or "hang on to your place," because ambition or boredom may dictate upward or downward mobility, but a sense of place—a feel for one's own position in the control room—is useful in gauging what you should try to do and in setting criteria for a sense of personal satisfaction.

What was I to Richard Nixon, and what did I want to be? Aides can have a variety of ambitions: friend, gadfly, counselor, hatchetman, conscience, philosopher, footstool, amanuensis, spokesman, shoofly, interpreter—these and other roles are available to one who joins a great enterprise at or near the beginning. Available to choose from, not to try to blanket, for the nearer the proximity to the goal, the narrower the need for any individual and the smaller his slice of The Man.

I chose the oxymoronic role of sloganeering philosopher, or creative interpreter; I would like to have been what the Presidentologists call an "intimate adviser," but Haldeman explained once that Nixon considered me too "brittle"—that was the President's word for someone who would not hang tough over the long haul—and too much a loner. No complaints; I am better off in print than in court or in jail.

As Polly Adler would hasten to say, a place is not a niche: it can be a position to operate from, to observe from, and, when the time is ripe, to move from.

I was never a Nixon "intimate" the way Haldeman or Ehrlichman, or even Buchanan or Chapin or Ziegler, was. I was a proven loyalist, however, like Bob Finch and Herb Klein and Peter Flanigan, an Old Nixon Hand who could expect certain privileges of access and could exercise the right to be forthright, and after a time was expected to present an iconoclastic position. Until I discovered in 1973 that I had been wiretapped in 1969, I was sure that my proven loyalty gave me the widest latitude in associating with reporters and political adversaries who were known to Nixon as "them."

Because I believe no serious man can afford to be solemn, and because I enjoy the company of people who treat life more as a joy than a chore, I was generally seen to be "different": as I soft-sold some point of view about Nixon policies, religiously holding to an irreverent tone, I would be asked, "What is a nice Jewish boy like you doing in the Nixon White House?" And when I left to go to work as a columnist for the New York *Times*, Harrison Salisbury—another man I met in the Moscow kitchen—greeted me with a funny turnaround: "What's a nice Nixon man like you doing at the New York *Times*?"

He had a point. As a former New Yorker comfortable with the campaigns of Nelson Rockefeller and Jacob Javits, and as a new Washingtonian who enjoyed the company of the "Georgetown set," I could hardly be counted as an example of the Nixon mainstream. And back in New York, as a long-time Nixon loyalist, certified member of the Long March Back, with intense feelings about intellectual snobbery, a receptivity to a new

kind of Federalism—and a genuine liking for both Nixon and Agnew—I hardly fit the mold of most people's stereotype of a liberal *Times*man.

In both cases this might have resulted in the status of house pariah, but in fact it has not: the trick in living against the grain of your closest associates is in hanging on grimly but good-humoredly to your own identity. I enjoy the swim upstream: you cover much less distance than a fish swimming with the current, but that fish hardly can tell he's moving and you feel as if you're going very fast.

Since I do not regret "selling" in the past, the reader may wonder if I am still selling, or condoning or justifying, or getting even, in this book. That's for the reader to decide; the intent here is to write about what I have learned and seen others learn about people and processes more than programs and policies; about men who had strength of character and defects in character who acted at times wisely or heroically, at times stupidly or villainously. It is not the whole story, not even all of the story one aide could observe, but it is a start on a side that has not been told. Nor will I burden this book with too many memoranda that made me look omniscient: I keep thinking of my 1971 memo to Haldeman, copy to John Dean, that began: "Why don't we make more of the fact that ours is a scandal-free Administration?"

Because I did not know anything that was going on in regard to bugging and burglary and ultimately Watergate and its concealment, a fairminded person might wonder whether I knew what was going on at all. Such a legitimate wonderment presupposes, however, that Watergate and its roots were "all"—and, hard though it may be to grasp in the midst of its aftermath, dirty tricks and security excesses did not occupy any of the time of most of the men in the White House. Of the men who were involved, during the first term it was considered one seedy but necessary activity in the defense of the nation, while so much else was going on. Nearly every action, in this small section of some men's activities, had a precedent—from the secret recordings in FDR's day to a tax break given Eisenhower on his book to the surveillance of Martin Luther King by the Kennedys—but the "everybody did it" defense, while providing some perspective, pales alongside the fact that nobody else did it so systematically or widely.

The Nixon Administration will never escape Watergate, but nobody who wants to understand what happened in Nixon's Presidency will succeed by becoming transfixed by its subsequent impeachment drama. A great deal more was going on at the time; Nixon and his men were trying to shape great events, not to seize dictatorial power. Perhaps historians will revise the angriest judgments of the mid-Seventies; perhaps the observations of a speechwriter who was sometimes an insider will help round out those judgments.

When Judge Samuel Rosenman, FDR's speechwriter, came down to Washington in 1969, I took him back to one of his old haunts, the Cabinet Room; he remarked at the change of portraits—the ones in his time had been replaced often, and the three men chosen by the current President to

inspire his chief associates were Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Dwight Eisenhower—but then, misty-eyed, he pointed down to the end of the long table and said, "That's where Bobby Sherwood, Harry Hopkins, and I used to work on speeches. The walkway along the side there was built so the President could wheel himself in and out." He asked if we worked that way, in committee, and I said no—Nixon preferred to work with one writer on a single speech, and rarely in the White House, usually in his personal office across the street in the Old Executive Office Building. He gave a final look around the room and said, "It always seems so much smaller when you come back, from the way you remembered it." It always does.

Since this book is by a speechwriter, there is this danger: episodism. Writers in the Nixon years were not at the center of policymaking or decision (Clark Clifford would arch an eyebrow and Sam Rosenman would have waggled a jowl at this derogation of their powerful function) and would spend most of their time orbiting, holding their patterns, men in waiting, until the moment came. Then, suddenly, they were drawn closer to the center than anyone else, and for three days or a week could get a close-up view of history before being spun out once again to the periphery. That is why a non-intimate can write a fairly intimate memoir.

In the first few months of the Nixon Administration, when some old buildings were being demolished near the White House, there was a "rat scare"—field rats who lived in the foundations of the buildings being torn down were scurrying downtown, frightening people. The Department of Interior put down some poison in key places and soon the problem was solved.

A new problem arose: an animal lover wrote irate letters to just about everybody charging that the rat poison used was killing squirrels, and that the squirrel population of Washington was being decimated by the indiscriminate use of rat poison.

Mindful of the furor that animal lovers raised when President Johnson picked up a beagle by its ears, I checked and received fervent assurances that the rat poison spread was practically mother's milk to squirrels. Double-checking—never trust the bureaucracy—I talked to the White House gardener, a man with no partisan axe to grind, who told me that the only dead squirrel found on the White House grounds lately had been a friendly little fellow that he had known for years and who had died of old age. The gardener was sad about that.

Ron Ziegler, the President's press secretary, was my next stop. In case the question came up in a briefing, I wanted him prepared to refute the charge, and not to treat it as some kind of joke. We went through the documents together and he quickly went to the heart of the matter:

"Got it," Ziegler said briskly. "We're against the rats, we're for the squirrels."

That was Policy. For details, he could send questioners to the proper ex-

perts at Agriculture who knew all about poisons. As it happened, Ziegler was never asked the question, but that was no surprise, since we anticipated many questions that reporters never got around to asking.

As the years passed, I thought about the policy on the rats and squirrels: hastily arrived at, simplistic, ignoring all the shades and nuances that should be considered before the "easy answer" was proposed.

After all, both squirrels and rats are rodents. Although some wharf rats are disease carriers and should be exterminated on sight, most field rats live their lives of quiet desperation never interfering with the rat races of men, and indeed playing their necessary ecological role.

Nor is every squirrel a saint. Although their image is that of wisdom and thrift, tucking nuts away for the winter in an animal version of the work ethic, many—especially those in city parks—resort to begging, beginning a cycle of helpless dependency.

As Charles Colson, hatchetman, gutfighter, and one of the men closest to Richard Nixon, said a few months after he left the White House, and a few months before he copped a guilty plea: "I've discovered that all the guys we thought were our friends weren't so good, and all the guys we thought were our enemies aren't so bad."

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# PART ONE

# THE COMEBACK

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# 1. TWENTY BROAD STREET

Drafting a new introduction to the paperback edition of *Six Crises* in early 1968, I suggested some fairly frank language to two-time-loser Dick Nixon about his political depression in 1963, and he made it even franker:

" 'No political future' was a fair statement. As a lawyer, I had a good career ahead, but as a political force, as I said at my 'last press conference' in 1962, I was through.

"I wish I could analyze the workings of American democracy and the mystery of public opinion that took a man from 'finished' in 1963 to candidate for the Presidency in 1968. I cannot. Not even a statesman who was also a great historian—Winston Churchill—could adequately explain why, after a decade in political eclipse, he was the one called upon to lead his nation in a time of crisis.

"There is no doubt, however, about what was not the reason for my candidacy today: it was not by dint of my own calculation or efforts. No man, not if he combined the wisdom of Lincoln with the connivance of Machiavelli, could have maneuvered or manipulated his way back into the arena."

Calculation and connivance there was, and a good deal of careful work, but Nixon's fatalism was understandable: after the Goldwater disaster, the rising protest against the Vietnam war, and the vacuum that seemed to exist among potential Republican "new face" candidates there did seem to be a confluence of events and a combination of forces that drew Nixon back from oblivion.

When he came to New York in late 1963, after Warner-Lambert chairman Elmer Bobst arranged for his name to be placed at the head of a prestigious but moribund law firm, Nixon was decidedly "through" as a potential political leader. Bill Rogers recalled those days: "It's hard now to understand how far down he was. He was broke. He had no future in the field he knew best. He was in Rockefeller's state and cut off." Bill and Adele Rogers took Pat and Dick Nixon to dinner at New York's "21" to welcome them; they all got a little high, and the happiest was Pat—glad to

be rid of politics, where not even the victories were sweet. Afterward, Rogers did not see too much of his old friend from the Eisenhower days, because he did not want to be drawn into any "Nixon orbit" that might develop: New York was Rockefeller land, and Washington was where Rogers represented the Washington *Post*.

But there always seemed to be "Nixon people" around to help out in areas where the Available Man was called upon for help by local candidates. Charlie McWhorter, his former legislative aide, worked for AT&T in New York and kept in touch; Ned Sullivan, a second cousin of Pat Nixon's, was available for chores; and a variety of lawyers who just seemed to want to keep a loyal hand in kept popping up. I had dropped out of John Lindsay's campaign for Mayor of New York—too many hotshots acting like a palace guard, I thought—and decided to invest some spare time going for the brass ring with Nixon.

The first experience was not good. I rode out to New Jersey with him on October 24, 1965, after he had been asked to speak on behalf of Wayne Dumont, Jr., for Governor. Nixon had been talking to me about winning over the center, reaching out to some intellectuals, but when he got on the stump, out came a flag-waving denunciation of a Rutgers University professor who had said he would welcome a victory of the Viet Cong. To a cheering American Legion audience, Nixon asked: "Does an individual employed by the State have a right to use his position to give aid and comfort to the enemies of the United States in wartime?" and the five hundred Legionnaires and their wives roared back, "No!"

Riding home in a rented limousine—the only fee Nixon charged the men he supported was the travel expense—I asked him why he had dug back to the Fifties that way: Dumont had no chance to win, and an anti-Communist pitch wouldn't even work in California anymore. But he felt good about it: "Oh, I know you and the rest of the intellectuals won't like it—the men back at the firm won't like it either—but somebody had to take 'em on. Imagine a professor teaching that line to kids." I had to admit there was something to be said for a man who said what he thought against all good political calculation, but it turned out that there was an element of political calculation in it, too. The next day, to his "Christmas list" of supporters around the country went a copy of his statement in New Jersey, which was a toned-down version of the stump speech, and this letter:

RICHARD M. NIXON
20 BROAD STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

October 26, 1965

Dear Bill:

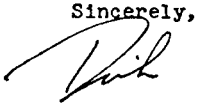
On April 23, 1965, Eugene D. Genovese, a professor at Rutgers - a New Jersey state university - speaking at a teach-in on the university campus, stated: "I do not fear or regret the impending Vietcong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it..."

The Republican candidate for Governor, Senator Wayne Dumont, demanded that Professor Genovese be dismissed from his position because of this statement. His Democrat opponent, Governor Hughes, took the opposite position on the ground that Genovese's dismissal would be a violation of his right to free speech.

I thought you might be interested in seeing the statement that I made in support of Senator Dumont's position at Morristown, New Jersey, on Sunday, October 24.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,



Mr. Bill Safire
375 Park Avenue
New York, New York

I wasn't happy with it; neither was Leonard Garment, Nixon's law partner. Garment was the litigating partner in the firm of Nixon, Mudge, Rose, Guthrie and Alexander—handling cases that went before juries—and had an intuitive grasp of what persuaded people and what turned them away. A liberal, a Democrat, he had been prepared to believe all the stereotypes about Nixon but was surprised by his partner's analytical approach to the nation's problems. Nixon was working on Garment, an atypical Wall Streeter who once played the clarinet in Henry Jerome's band (at a tense moment at the Miami Convention a few years later, I burst into his hotel room to find Garment playing Mozart on his clarinet as a way of clearing his head). Between us, over the months, and with the help of a more conservative young lawyer in the firm, John Sears, we gave some intellectual

depth to the position Nixon had taken in his written statement—and, trading, convinced him to adopt a position we believed to be more centrist and sound on a related subject of growing importance, campus dissent.

Nixon would not back away from his position against the specific professor—when it came to matters he identified as support for U.S. troops abroad, he dug in his heels—but at a commencement address at the University of Rochester, he presented it more reasonably: "I believe that any teacher who uses the forum of a university to proclaim that he welcomes victory for the enemy in a shooting war crosses the line between liberty and license. If we are to defend academic freedom from encroachment we must also defend it from its excesses."

After a lot of discussion that seems significant in retrospect, he went on to espouse a position on a subject that was central to his future, the erosion of which ultimately cost him dearly:

> Examine the spectrum of freedom. At one extreme is anarchy—too much freedom, where nobody is really free at all.
>
> At the other end of the spectrum is tyranny—the totalitarian state which stresses order to the exclusion of personal liberty.
>
> In the center is limited freedom, with its very limits posing a kind of defense perimeter against the extremes of anarchy and tyranny.
>
> Here at the points of contact—on the defense perimeter of freedom—is the area of the most difficult choice.
>
> It is easy enough to avoid the choice, to try to escape the tensions along the perimeter by advocating the extreme positions of total control or no control.
>
> The simple answers, the easy solutions, lead to the simple and easy destruction of liberty. The hard choices, the delicate balances along the perimeter of limited freedom, are the ones you will have to face. Not one of us will be right in his choice every time—but we will always be right to face the hard choices as to where to draw the line.
>
> If you agree that a line must be drawn somewhere, as I believe most members of the academic community do, the next question is—where do you draw that line?
>
> I submit that no one person, and no single group has the right or the power to draw that line by itself. Only through the interplay of free discussion can a balance be struck, with each of us willing to speak out on our interpretation of the line that not only limits—but defends —academic freedom.

In the course of working on that speech in his 20 Broad Street office —with its ivory elephants, souvenir gavels, and gifts from potentates met on his Vice Presidential travels—we came across an idea for a contrapuntal line, like one of those that Ted Sorensen did so well for John Kennedy. It didn't quite come off, so I started to move to the next paragraph, but Nixon knew what I was after, and he hung in there—for twenty min-

utes we worked on a single line. I was surprised; politicians I had known would not do that. Nixon liked a "quotable quote"; he had respect both for language and for President Wilson:

"Woodrow Wilson's distinction between men of thought and men of action can no longer be made. The man of thought who will not act is ineffective; the man of action who will not think is dangerous."

Nixon could not resist sending Garment and myself copies of a conservative criticism he received from former President Dwight David Eisenhower:

DDE

GETTYSBURG
PENNSYLVANIA 17325

June 13, 1966

Dear Dick:

Thank you for your note of the seventh and the text of the talk you made at the University of Rochester. Incidentally, it is one of my favorite institutions; I particularly admire its young president, Wallis.

I agree with almost everything you say—your line of reasoning is sound. Basically you agree that the maximum of human liberty can exist only in an orderly, self-governing society. To determine the correct degree of human liberty on one side and orderliness in our society on the other, has long been a subject of political debate.

For myself I am a bit skeptical about the assertion that teachers and students possess a special freedom in America. Academic freedom is merely one of the freedoms that we enjoy; it is difficult if not impossible to name one that could be completely eliminated without causing the destruction of all. But the specific statement that creates in me a considerable doubt is the one you make near the bottom of page four where you say, ". . . *academic freedom should protect the right of a professor or student to advocate . . . communism. . . .*"

Communism is a very special sort of doctrine in that it openly advocates destruction of the form of government by violence, if necessary, that protects all the freedoms we enjoy. I personally disagree with the Supreme Court decision of some years back that released a lot of Communists convicted under the Smith Act from prison on the theory that it is all right to *advocate* Communism as long as the individual *did not take any overt action*

*to destroy our form of government.* Take for example Tom Paine and George Washington. Obviously Tom Paine had far more to do in bringing about the revolt against Britain than did George Washington, yet under the Supreme Court doctrine of today, Paine would have gone scot-free in the event the revolt failed, while Washington would have been hanged. This is the only statement in your paper with which I disagree.

Possibly, I am just stubborn.

With warm personal regard,

*As ever*
*D.E.*

In 1966, Garment's most exciting time with Nixon was spent on the Hill case. The Hill family had sued *Life* magazine for sensationalizing an incident involving their captivity by escaped convicts—an incident made into the play *The Desperate Hours* in 1955. The family had to move away from their neighborhood to escape the publicity; their unwanted notoriety damaged them, and Nixon and Garment fought the case up to the Supreme Court. I was fascinated—the right to privacy had been important to me ever since reading Louis Brandeis' famous article about it—and the fact that Nixon not only chose this case to argue but handled it so well in argument before the Supreme Court was impressive to civil libertarians. Nixon lost the case on a 5–4 decision but won supporters among men close to him who had previously been wary observers. (The Hill family was able to get a substantial out-of-court settlement from *Life*. Nixon wrote a 2,500-word memorandum to Garment after the argument, criticizing his own performance as a lawyer, which—while too complex to go into here—revealed both his introspective bent and grasp of Constitutional issues.)

What fascinated Nixon, however, was not the general right to privacy of the Hill family, but the specific right to privacy *from the press.* The right to privacy from the government (as in wiretaps) did not enter into it, as Sears and I were to discover later.

I was able to sell the North American Newspaper Alliance on syndicating a series of ten articles by Nixon about the issues of the 1966 campaign: Nixon considered this no small breakthrough, for it gave him an outlet in forty important newspapers, especially in the West and South, and provided the income ($10,000) for the salary of Patrick J. Buchanan, the first full-time new Nixon "staffer." Buchanan, then twenty-eight, brought a conservative ideology and a punchy prose style from his job as an editorial writer at the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat,* and also brought a sense of amused wonderment, as if to say, "Do you guys realize what we're doin'?" He called himself "Aide to Richard Nixon" and drafted many of the NANA pieces; a romance between single people bloomed in the law office,

which is always a happy sign in a campaign, and five years later Buchanan was to marry Shelly Scarney, a serene and lovely Nixon secretary, with the President in attendance recalling the early days when they had started work together.

At that time, "Campaign '66" was under way, financed and headed by Maurice Stans, formerly Eisenhower's Budget Director (who liked to point out that he was the last man to balance the Federal budget, and would go off every year on a big-game hunting safari); Peter Flanigan, a hard-working investment banker and Old Nixon Hand from the '60 campaign; and law partner Tom Evans, acting as executive officer. We met in the Metropolitan Club off Fifth Avenue, plotting delightedly on green felt tablecloths, with Nixon usually coming in at the end of the meeting to give lift: "You're natural conspirators," he would say with a wink, and in a minor-league way we were.

There are two moments in "Campaign '66" in which I had a part and are worth recording here. One has to do with Nelson Rockefeller, who wanted to run against Lyndon Johnson, and the other has to do with Lyndon Johnson, who wanted to run against Richard Nixon.

## 2. DEAR NELSON

The relationship between Richard Nixon and Nelson Rockefeller in 1966 was that of a mongoose and a cobra temporarily called upon to work side by side. They had fought before and would fight again, but while Rockefeller was running an uphill race for re-election and Nixon was running around the country supporting Republicans, they agreed to a truce so they could oppose some common enemies.

Nixon had nipped Rockefeller's Presidential bid in the bud in 1959; Rockefeller drove a bargain for his support of the platform at the 1960 Convention with the "Compact of Fifth Avenue" that made Nixon appear to be a suppliant; Rockefeller went through the motions of campaigning for Nixon in 1960, but the Nixon people knew he was dragging a foot; Rockefeller needed Nixon to help stop Goldwater in 1964, which Nixon declined to do; when Nixon came to New York in 1963 to work as a Wall Street lawyer, Rockefeller effectively froze the transplanted Californian out of all state political activity, for fear he would establish a "base." Subtly underscoring these maneuverings of ambitious leaders was the fact that each of them harbored, and in private did not conceal, a hearty personal dislike for the other.

Their strange bedfellowship in 1966 began with a fund-raiser's innocent blunder. Austin Tobin, Jr., a Rockefeller fund-raiser, got the bright idea one summer day to include Richard Nixon's name in a solicitation letter to conservative Republicans. Without checking with anyone else in the Rockefeller entourage, Tobin asked John Shaheen, whom he knew to be a Nixon supporter and law firm client, to see if Nixon would be willing to go on the letterhead.

Nixon told Shaheen that this seemed like a strange way to go about a rapprochement. He remembered an episode when William Miller, Barry Goldwater's running mate in 1964 and a former New York Congressman, came out for Rockefeller for Governor in the early spring of 1966: Jackie Robinson, on the Rockefeller staff, denounced him and demanded that the Governor repudiate his support, which he did, leaving Miller high and

dry. Nixon suggested that Shaheen check the matter out with Jack Wells and me. As a known Nixon man on the Rockefeller-for-Governor payroll, I was a likely conduit.

It turned out, as Nixon suspected, that nobody high up knew anything about it. The request for Nixon's support of Rockefeller was discreetly withdrawn. But the idea was intriguing to Wells and William Pfeiffer, a crusty politician managing the Rockefeller campaign. The "Western tier" of New York State was weak, and Syracuse, the state's third largest city, was a hotbed of conservative distaste for the Governor.

As the campaign moved into its last week, the *Daily News*'s highly regarded straw poll showed Rockefeller trailing Democrat Frank O'Connor, and the pros knew where much of the weakness lay—among conservative Republicans, especially in and around Onondaga County, the environs of Syracuse.

Until that time, Rockefeller's attitude about Nixon was that he "needed no outside help" and that Nixon, despite his New York residence, was an "outsider." Nixon had respected this and whenever he campaigned in New York for a Congressman and was asked about a Rockefeller endorsement replied, "The Governor has specifically said that he sought no outside help. Of course I will vote as a Republican." This kind of left-handed endorsement made it clear to many Republicans who disliked Rockefeller and liked Nixon that the support for Rockefeller was lukewarm at best.

On Monday, October 31, Jack Wells called me into his corner office at the New York Hilton and laid it on the line:

"Dick Nixon is going to be speaking Wednesday night in Syracuse on behalf of a couple of Congressional candidates. Bill Pfeiffer and I think it would be a good idea for Dick to come out with a strong endorsement of Rockefeller."

"What about the Miller syndrome?"

"We're cured. Think he'll play?"

"For old times' sake?" I asked.

Wells grinned. "See what it would take."

Nixon was speaking in Lodi, New Jersey, that night, and I drove out to hear his speech and to ride back in the car with him. It was Hallowe'en, and the red, white, and blue bunting clashed with the black and orange witches and hobgoblins in the meeting hall, but Dick was in form, with the one-liners working and the crowd enthusiastic.

In the limousine afterward, feet up on the jump seat, he examined the authentic Rockefeller "probe."

"We'd have to watch out for anything like the Miller thing." I assured him that would not be a problem, that I could get a guarantee from Wells that both Rockefeller and Senator Jacob Javits would publicly welcome the endorsement.

The "buttinsky" problem was more difficult. "I've been consistent in campaigning only in those areas that requested me," Nixon said. "Would Nelson be willing to admit that he had changed his mind, and asked me

to speak up for him in New York? Won't be easy for him. Let me sleep on it."

Next morning at eight o'clock—this was November 1, one week before Election Day—Nixon called me at home and made these suggestions: If Nixon were to be used for Rockefeller in New York State, he had to be used strongly. A statewide five-minute television appearance would be the answer. In it he would point out that he had campaigned for Congressmen throughout the United States, would press for election of Republican Congressmen in New York State, would stress the necessity of the two-party system and in that context add a strong pitch for Rockefeller and the entire state ticket.

Nixon recognized Rockefeller's difficulty in admitting that he had changed his mind and asked Nixon to campaign for him. With the *Daily News* poll showing Rockefeller trailing O'Connor, this reversal would appear to be a desperation move. Nixon was willing to "voluntarily" come out for Rockefeller provided he was certain that (a) his endorsement would be received with enthusiasm by Rockefeller and Javits, and (b) Rockefeller would help Nixon elect Congressmen in Iowa by helping to finance an Iowa telecast.

That was quite a package—better for Nixon than it was for Rockefeller. Nixon was proposing to come to the rescue in a way that could only be construed as a rescue effort. That would take some pride-swallowing by Rockefeller. Nixon was also proposing to provide a fig leaf by "volunteering" his aid "without being asked," but coupling this with a request for Rockefeller money to help win a few squeaker races for Republicans in Iowa, on the basis that if you wanted help from the party, you should be willing to give help to the party.

I told Nixon I thought Rockefeller would rather spend the rest of his life on a ranch in Venezuela than agree to all of this, but it would be an interesting discussion and was worth a try.

Jack Wells called a meeting in a Hilton room at 10 A.M. Present were Governor Rockefeller, Bill Pfeiffer, William Ronan, with Senator Javits joining us toward the end.

Wells began by carefully protecting my back. "Bill here is an old friend and loyal supporter of Dick Nixon. His firm has been helping us in this campaign. All aboveboard. Yesterday, I asked him to talk to Dick about speaking up for the Governor in Syracuse when he's there tomorrow night. Here's his report."

I pointed out first, and repeated for emphasis, that if Rockefeller wanted to admit publicly that he had asked Nixon to campaign for him in New York State, then Nixon would do whatever Rockefeller requested. If, however, Rockefeller wanted to avoid the appearance of "needing" Nixon, which was understandable, then Nixon would need a graceful way to volunteer his endorsement. In the course of a statewide Congressional telecast, such an endorsement would be natural and could not be interpreted as Nixon "butting in."

Then I laid out the other suggestions. Throughout what I had to say, Bill Ronan—a former professor who served as Rockefeller's right-hand man in government—kept shaking his head. He did not want help from Nixon at all. Pfeiffer, the political pro, registered understanding but no reaction. The Governor sat on the edge of a desk, his legs dangling, looking at the floor glumly. I finished. There was a pause, and Rockefeller said incredulously: "Iowa!"

Wells said that Nixon's Iowa suggestion was for a legitimate party purpose and was quite proper. Pfeiffer was disturbed about the possibility that a focus on Nixon caused by statewide TV would upset a New York *Post* endorsement expected the next day. Ronan kept shaking his head; Rockefeller remained silent.

Senator Javits came in and I went through it again for him. His opinion was expressed crisply, without waiting to hear what others had said: "The Iowa contribution doesn't bother me. But a telecast like that would make Nixon the issue in New York in the closing days, and it would cost more votes than it would gain. What do you say, Nelson?"

"Iowa!" said Rockefeller again, this time in a hoarse whisper. Then he added that he didn't want a controversy about Nixon at the end of the campaign.

Pfeiffer suggested that I ask Nixon simply to speak up for the state ticket in Syracuse "without being asked."

I asked Rockefeller what his reaction would be to that endorsement. Rockefeller sighed and said, "Delighted." Javits said, "I would be willing to go up and down the State of New York saying that Dick Nixon had every right to endorse anybody he pleased, and I was glad that he saw fit to endorse Nelson Rockefeller."

Rockefeller said, "Isn't there anything else we have to worry about?" and I left.

In a subsequent telephone conversation Wells told me that it would be a good idea for Nixon to "be a good soldier" at Syracuse. Although the Iowa request was turned down, he pointed out that Rockefeller had reversed himself on the "outsider" worry and that Nixon would understand why Nelson could not be in the position of asking him for help.

At 6 P.M., November 1, Nixon called me from Minnesota and was briefed on the meeting. He seemed a little testy when told of Javits' sharp reaction but said he could well understand Rockefeller's reluctance to admit any need.

I pointed out that Rockefeller was behind in the polls and recommended that Nixon do what the Rockefeller group had asked, adding that Wells—who supported the original Nixon suggestion at the meeting—in particular wanted Nixon to "be a good soldier."

Nixon said, "Don't say what I am going to do. But you can tell Wells that I will do the right thing." I reported to Wells that Nixon would "do the right thing." Jack seemed relieved.

As Nixon headed toward Syracuse, I ruminated on what I thought was

a Rockefeller political mistake. Politics is a business of give and take; in this case, from his side, it was all take and no give. He had good reason not to sponsor Nixon on statewide TV but could have helped those candidates in Iowa. That would have been a compromise showing some understanding of the political life, leaving open the possibility of a warily amicable relationship in the future. But he wanted everything—including protection against having asked for support—and was prepared to give only the assurance of a nonrejection in return.

Nixon took this rebuff in good grace and went on—in New York *Post* reporter Murray Kempton's words—"to sketch his profile in political courage by mentioning Rockefeller's name in Syracuse." It was a full, unstinting endorsement. Nixon had been a good soldier.

Late the next morning, I was at Rockefeller headquarters basking in the glow of party unity when I saw the early edition of the afternoon newspaper, the *World Journal Tribune*—which said that Rockefeller's press spokesman, informed of the Nixon endorsement, reacted coolly. That was not a negotiation rebuff—that was a double-cross.

I ran down the hall, past Wells's and Pfeiffer's offices, and went downstairs to take the subway to 20 Broad Street. There, from Nixon's office, I called Wells.

"Calm down," he growled before I could get started. "I couldn't tell anybody in advance what Nixon would say and how we should react. Now I got to our press people and they're putting out the right story. It'll be on the wires in twenty minutes."

It was. In less than a half hour, Wells called to read me the warm reception that Nixon's Syracuse endorsement of Rockefeller was getting from the Governor, Senator Javits, everybody.

As an afterthought, I mentioned that a little private note from his principal to mine might not go amiss, in the light of the missed signal. The next day, a warm letter arrived expressing the Governor's gratitude.

The idea of a thank-you note turned out to be my biggest contribution to the dealings between the two men. On Tuesday morning, November 8, 1966—which was to be Nixon's first good-news Election Day in exactly ten years—Nixon wrote an intriguing "Dear Nelson" answer to Rockefeller.

He began by replying to the Governor's thank-you note as "thoughtful and gracious but not at all necessary. As we both know from long experience, some of our friends in the press have determined the plots for their political scenarios long in advance. Whenever the dialogue doesn't fit their preconceived notions as to what the participants should be doing and saying at a particular time, they simply change the facts to fit their plots!"

After wishing him well, Nixon put a curious idea forward: "Whatever happens tonight, I recognize that we will probably continue to have different views as to the personalities who should prevail at the Presidential and Vice Presidential level. Completely apart from those differences, I hope that some time during the months ahead we can sit down and have a good talk about foreign policy. I am deeply distressed by the fact that the

Johnson Administration has failed to come up with one single new idea in the field of foreign policy during the three years it has been in office. I also believe that not only in Asia, where we have an immediate problem, but particularly in Europe there are situations which simply cry out for new initiatives.

". . . My suggestion is so way out that nothing may materialize from it, but it would be quite exciting and intriguing if the two of us could sit down, as we did in times gone by, and provide some much needed leadership in the foreign policy area."

Typically, Nixon provided an out for both Rockefeller and himself: "This letter is not being written 'for the record,' but solely in personal terms. If the idea does not appeal to you I, of course, will understand and I am sure we shall both find other areas of interest which will more than take up what time we can devote to such activities."

And, finally, Nixon, who did not jest at scars because he had felt the wounds, closed with this one-pro-to-another paragraph: "When the history of this campaign is written, it will be recorded that win, lose or draw you fought a most gallant battle. It took an incredible amount of courage to look at those unfavorable polls early this year and then to make a horse race out of the contest. There are plenty of people who can put on a good campaign when things are going their way. What separates the men from the boys is that rare ability which you have demonstrated in this contest to fight at your best when the odds were greatest."

To my knowledge, Rockefeller never replied. If he had not rebuffed Nixon's overture, if the two men worked together in the next year on foreign affairs—ah, if only, who's to say what might have happened. But if the Governor had decided to work together with Nixon without absolutely needing to, then he would not be Nelson Rockefeller.

Flashforward to November 1968, aboard *Air Force One* with President-elect Nixon during the interregnum, as he went over Cabinet possibilities. Nelson Rockefeller had been frequently suggested for several posts.

"At Treasury," I said, "what about David Rockefeller—no, you can't have two Rockefellers in the Cabinet."

"Is there a law," Nixon asked without changing expression, "that you have to have one?"

## 3. TURNING POINT

There is an old pro who scorns the wearing of buttons during campaigns, but who sports this one on Election Night: "Great Job, Kid, Now Get Lost." Dick Nixon's friends wondered whether that would be the attitude of the party toward Nixon after the campaign. Tom Dewey, after 1948, was always warmly welcomed as a Grand Old Supporter, but he knew that if a tinge of suspicion arose that he might become a candidate again, the warmth would surely turn to heat. "We love you, but not for candidate" —would that be the party regulars' attitude toward Nixon?

There was good reason to think so. The Republican National Committee, under Ray Bliss, was being scrupulously correct long before it needed to be: Nixon's campaigning for the Congressional candidates was on his own, with no help offered by the RNC. Bliss, a nonideological technician who replaced Goldwater's Dean Burch after the 1964 debacle, had purchased a half hour of network television on the Sunday before Election Day for a campaign film. Word got out in late October that the film was far too gutty and abrasive, and would likely backfire against Republicans. We tried to get him to assign the time to the one Republican who was campaigning nationally, Richard M. Nixon, who knew how to use a half hour. Bliss would not consider the suggestion; the Romney people, he led us to believe, would never go along with Nixon acting as the party spokesman. (Of course, they were right.)

So Nixon stumped the country, blazing away at Lyndon Johnson on the inflation front ("the high cost of Johnson," "the War on Poverty has become the War on Prosperity") providing a focal point for local races, churning up publicity for Congressional candidates, making friends, giving a national sense of party to a group still wandering in the wilderness after 1964.

But on foreign affairs, Nixon's strongest suit, we were hamstrung: on Vietnam, we didn't have a villain. Nixon could criticize the conduct of the war, but not the war itself; with the nascent peace movement beginning to make noises, any Nixon criticism of the way Johnson was operat-

ing in Vietnam could be construed as taking the side of the war critics, which was not where we wanted to be at all. So Nixon remained generally in support, picking up what credit he could for not being partisan beyond the water's edge.

Then LBJ pulled a pre-election rabbit out of his hat: a conference of Asian nations to be held in Manila in mid-October 1966 which he would attend.

A week before he left for Manila, however, Johnson made a tactical political mistake that presaged a much greater error he was to make later in the campaign. He left his "consensus" position to attack the Republican Party as a party of "fear and negativism," which might have gone by as standard political hyperbole, had he not added that Republican gains might cause the nation to "falter and fall back and fail in Vietnam."

As Tom Wicker of the New York *Times* put it, "Richard M. Nixon, the most adept of the Republican issue-makers, lost no time in seizing on Mr. Johnson's invitation to partisan warfare." Nixon did this in the most nonpartisan way—by pointing to the fact that the voices of dissent had been coming from within the Democratic Party, not from the "loyal opposition." But the President's jab opened the way to Nixon's apparently reluctant and unassailable separation from Johnson's position on Vietnam. The difference of the two men's approaches was real—Nixon did not approve of "gradualism"—and now Nixon could permit some of the difference to show without being the one who "undercut" the President on foreign affairs.

But Johnson's plans for a trip to the Manila Conference effectively squelched his Republican opposition. In a September 28 statement, Nixon suggested that Johnson "repudiate" a couple of previously announced positions: that a conference be held in Geneva rather than in Asia for Pacific peace, and that UN Ambassador Arthur Goldberg should stop offering a bombing halt in exchange for a "secret promise" to de-escalate. To my knowledge, no newspaper ran Nixon's statement.

In a Chicago press conference on October 7, Nixon could only damn with faint praise: "The Manila Conference presents President Johnson with his first initiative in the area of foreign policy. That conference must not be made simply the scene of a grandstand play for votes." Nixon did what he could to gently fan the suspicion of political design in the timing of the conference without making any accusations: "The timing was certainly not designed to hurt the Democrats, but who is to say? There might have been other genuine reasons for holding it now." He could not resist an added barb: "This is the first time a President may have figured the best way to help his party is to leave the country."

Proposing that the President come back with a "Pacific Charter" (as a play on FDR's "Atlantic Charter," that set a goal that President Johnson might find hard to achieve), Nixon then tipped off his friends that he would be looking hard and closely at the communiqué which would be issued at the end of the conference: "If [the conference] produces some-

thing effective, it will have a massive effect on the election, but I don't believe the electorate will be impressed with any manifesto from Manila which tells us nothing." With that, he declared a moratorium on comment until the President returned to the United States, which would be just before the election. (Nixon enjoyed declaring moratoria; it was one of his favorite locutions, far more impressive than having to say, "I won't have anything to say for a while.")

One October morning, I opened the *Times* in my office in New York's Seagram Building expecting to find a diplomatically ambiguous, carefully drawn document. The news story about the Manila Communiqué was of little interest, so I turned to the official text. I read it, couldn't quite believe it, and read it again.

In essence, Johnson proposed "mutual withdrawal"; now, in retrospect, mutual withdrawal sounds like what we wanted all along. But the U.S. position evolved into mutual withdrawal much later on—only after Vietnamization built up the South's forces. Back in 1966, a mutual withdrawal proposal with no cease-fire guarantee meant that the United States and North Vietnam should get out and let the Viet Cong pulverize the South Vietnamese Government. It meant rejecting the "invasion" concept under which we first became involved, and accepting the "civil war" idea under which we should never have become involved.

Moreover, there was a line in the communiqué that I knew Nixon would spot since "surrendering the initiative" was a frequent criticism he had privately made of Johnson's Vietnam policy: "[allied] military action and support must depend for its size and duration on the intensity and duration of the Communist aggression." That would put us in the position of reacting rather than acting—letting the enemy set the timing for intense action and breathing spells.

I banged out a few pages of a critique and called Pat Buchanan on the road, arranging to meet Nixon in New Jersey. Nixon's criticism would be more newsworthy in the form of a letter to President Johnson, I thought. Buchanan felt that was too gimmicky, and Nixon was not sure, he wanted to look at it first.

In a hotel room in New Jersey, I took my notes along with a series of thoughts from Nixon and a previous statement of Buchanan's and dictated them to Rose Mary Woods in "Letter to the President" form, ending each subject with a complex question. Since few questions were then being asked in the press, I thought the approach might capture attention.

Nixon looked over the draft and shook his head no. The letter format did not appeal to him. And he wanted more time to think about the substance. We agreed to meet back in his law office in New York two days later for a rewrite.

On the morning of November 3, five days before election, Buchanan told reporters there would be an important "Appraisal of Manila" from Nixon that afternoon.

Nixon kept fiddling with it, I kept rewriting passages, and the statement

threatened to run longer than the communiqué. There was excitement in the 20 Broad Street office; secretaries Rose Woods, Shelley Scarney, and Anne Volz were typing portions of the manuscript, I was going from one to another with changes, and Buchanan was telling the reporters who came up to the law offices early that we would be ready in plenty of time. I had not seen Nixon under deadline pressure for a long time; I remember thinking then that I wished he would not get so ostentatiously calm, it slowed everything up. But he was determined not to make a foreign-policy mistake.

The analysis was legalistic, properly sober-sided, and ran about 2,500 words, but its essence can be caught in the questions that ran through the text:

1. Does this new Manila proposal for mutual withdrawal by the United States and North Vietnam mean that we are now willing to stand aloof and let the future of the South Vietnamese be determined by the victor of a military contest between the Viet Cong and the Government of South Vietnam?

2. In view of American co-sponsorship of the Manila Communiqué, may we now assume that the United States rejects a return to Geneva as a forum for the peace conference on Asia?

3. Will we, as the communiqué indicates, limit our military response to the fluctuating intensity of Communist aggression? Or shall we move in the other direction as General Eisenhower recommends, and increase the intensity of our military effort to shorten the war and to reduce American and allied casualties?

4. How many more American troops—in addition to this latest 46,000 —do we currently plan to send to fight in Vietnam in 1967? Will the draft quota, which reached a fifteen-year high in October, have to be raised again to meet our troop requirements?

5. Does the Johnson Administration, as is widely predicted, intend to raise taxes after November 8 to pay the rising costs of the war? Or will the President follow the proposed Republican route of cutting nonessential spending to provide the funds for this conflict?

Nixon had one additional question for me: "Do you think this will get any sort of play in the papers?" I said I thought it might if we would only finish it up so that it could make the A.M. deadlines. "Do you suppose," he said, "they would run the text in the New York *Times*?"

That is what I had been thinking about, too. When a story gets front-paged, that's good; but when the New York *Times* runs the full text inside, then the most influential paper is saying, "This is really important; this deserves study; this belongs in the permanent record." Very little of what Nixon had said while Vice President had seen its text run in the *Times*, and nothing since he came to New York in 1963.

I called Harrison Salisbury, the assistant managing editor of the New York *Times*, told him what Nixon was doing, and asked him if the *Times* would consider running the full text. He was polite but pointed out that

this was hardly a document of the nature of the Manila Communiqué itself. I sold as hard as I ever sold anything in my life, appealing to the *Times*'s sense of political fairness, to their news sense, to their neglect of Nixon in past weeks, even to our moments together in the Moscow kitchen (Salisbury took the pool notes there, the reader may recall). He would not give me any assurances but said he would look it over himself and discuss it with the other editors at the *Times*—if, of course, we put it quickly into the hands of the *Times* reporter sitting in the outer office at that moment.

I snatched pages out of the hands of secretaries, stapled them together, and handed them to Buchanan, who dealt them out to the reporters out front. It was an eight-point appraisal with—as I look at the mimeographed handout today—only seven points in it. Either it was numbered wrong or we left out a crucial paragraph, but there comes a time when you have to go into production.

The text ran next morning in the New York *Times*. Richard Nixon was not the only one who recognized the importance thus given his appraisal of Manila: Lyndon Baines Johnson saw the front page story and went through the roof of the White House.

Not since Harry Truman lashed out at a music critic had an American President dumped such abuse on an individual. In a full-fledged news conference, Johnson zeroed in on Nixon as a "chronic campaigner . . . never realized what was going on even when he had an official office . . . in California, you saw what the people did . . . waited in the wings for Senator Goldwater to stumble . . . an attempt to pick up a precinct or two or a ward . . ."

It was terrible. But for Nixon, it was wonderful. Ladybird Johnson, who sat along the wall, kept shaking her head and trying to catch her husband's eye to stop. Jack Valenti, a top Johnson aide, later told me: "I don't know what got into him. I never saw him like that in public before. It was so obvious that Nixon had gotten his goat and that he was just playing into Nixon's hands."

Johnson's press conference remarks that morning in 1966 were widely interpreted as an outburst of temper, a tirade as unplanned as it was uncalled for. I accepted the conventional wisdom for years but my own White House service made me wonder—hadn't President Johnson been briefed on the likely questions that morning? Was he losing his temper or using it? Didn't he know, as an old pro, that he was only helping Nixon?

In 1973, I compared notes about the election of 1966 with Bill Moyers, who was at that time Lyndon Johnson's press secretary, and Joseph Califano, then his chief domestic aide.

Moyers remembers going to Johnson's bedroom that morning to find the President hopping mad—"not at Nixon," Moyers said, *"but at the* Times *for printing the text.* 'Why are they giving all that space to that chronic campaigner,' the President said, 'don't they know it's all a lot of

politics?' " LBJ felt that the printing of the text was acknowledgment of the seriousness of the analysis—exactly as Nixon had known it. (Odd, how both Johnson and Nixon saw the printing of the text as crucial, and how we advisers—a different generation, perhaps, or too close to the press forest—did not attach that much importance to it.)

Before the press conference, Califano and Moyers went over the likely questions with LBJ, who decided—quite coolly and deliberately by then—that he would attack Nixon as the "chronic campaigner."

If the attack on Nixon at the press conference was not spontaneous but planned—and the testimony of two trusted Johnson men who were there, plus the logic of the situation, attests to that—then the question arises, why?

"Johnson thought that Nixon was the most vulnerable man in American politics—he said so that morning," says Moyers. Califano points out that a Nixon candidacy in 1968 was something that appealed to Johnson, who was already feeling the strain on the Democratic left.

Putting it together in retrospect, my guess is this: Johnson, irritated at the *Times* for treating Nixon so seriously, saw how he could take advantage of the situation politically by making Nixon his opponent. The growing dovecote in the Democratic Party might defect to a Rockefeller or a Romney, or throw away its vote to a splinter party or stay home, but Nixon—characterized as that "chronic campaigner," remembered as a Herblock cartoon—could frighten them back into LBJ's arms. In 1964 LBJ had knifed into traditional Republican strength with horrific visions of a bellicose Goldwater; in 1968 he could hold on to traditional Democratic strength with visions of the Old Nixon. That's why locking horns with Nixon that morning—while scratching an emotional irritation—was a Johnson decision that made political sense.

The irony was that the man LBJ chose as the easiest opponent for himself was the roughest opponent for the man who emerged when Johnson stepped aside in 1968, Hubert Humphrey. In calculating his blast at Nixon, Johnson simply miscalculated a little—the President appeared too tantrum-prone and the challenger too Presidentially calm—and to that extent, LBJ's tactic backfired. But Johnson wanted to run against Nixon in 1968, and this move fit that strategy, an assumption that seems more realistic than jumping to the conclusion that the master manipulator of the U. S. Senate had suddenly and inexplicably lost his political marbles.

As Johnson's heaven-sent tirade was going on, Nixon was being interviewed on film by Mike Wallace of CBS just before leaving in a private plane to New Hampshire. When Nixon got on board, Buchanan had the news of the Presidential press conference. "He *hit* us," said Pat, shaking his head. "Jesus, did he hit us. You'll never believe how he hit us . . ." Buchanan had never before been on the receiving end of a major shot in politics and didn't yet know how to react. Nixon told him to calm down and repeat all he could remember of what the President had said. On the

flight up, Nixon sat looking out the window, thinking about how to handle it.

Mike Wallace scrapped the film he had made of Nixon pre-Johnson press conference, and hired a jet to get a fresh interview in New Hampshire. Before that took place, Nixon called me in New York, not to ask advice but to lay out the line: "I'm going to be absolutely cool," he said excitedly. "High road. President is tired, after all, it was a long trip. Not answer in kind. Stick to the issues. No personalities, got that? Bill, it was that text in the *Times* that got to him. But I didn't think he'd go this far. He's wrong, you know—let's make the most of it."

I couldn't figure out if Nixon was being the participant as observer or the observer as participant, but make the most of it is what he did. At the right moment, injured innocence can swing a segment of public opinion, and Richard Nixon had been unfairly attacked with those LBJ thunderbolts from the pinnacle of power. For what? For daring to ask the questions that only a man with a deep understanding of foreign affairs could ask.

Nixon, who had triggered all this with a lengthy printed statement, now swung far away from print to the television medium, where the votes were. He granted every request for television interviews—and this time, when we went back to Ray Bliss and the Republican National Committee about their Sunday half hour, they could not refuse to scrap their questionable film and give the time to the Republican under direct fire from the President.

By making one break by himself—the text of the appraisal in the *Times* —Nixon lucked into the next break and was projected into the limelight of official party spokesman, the number one campaigner, the man who acted like a President when the President did not. Just about every Republican politician around the country who was thinking about 1968 tuned in to that party-purchased half hour. The last they remembered of Nixon was his "last press conference," embittered, less than coherent, a bundle of emotions, in a way like Johnson's most recent press conference. The man they saw now was a happier warrior who knew how to respond to the moment and then—calmly and persuasively—to lay out his arguments in a well-packaged half hour. What other potential candidate could do that?

"This attack isn't going to gag me," Nixon said, in a phrase vaguely reminiscent of the "Checkers" speech fourteen years before, but more low-key, as befits a mature man who cannot be trifled with. "I was never one that could be arm-twisted by anyone and frightened even by the towering temper of Lyndon Johnson." That showed he was a man of courage. "I don't think any American—and I would say no Democrat—has defended our policy in Vietnam more effectively than I have in every capital of the world." Bipartisan patriotism, and in case anybody missed the world-traveler allusion, he went on with: "I defended it in Paris; I have defended it in London; I have defended it in Rome . . ." Republican politicians and delegates-to-be heaved a sigh of relief in the knowledge that, after the un-

nerving experience with Goldwater's amateurishness, here was Old Pro Nixon who could still touch all the bases.

On election night, Nixon took a suite at the Drake Hotel in New York. Bald John Nidecker handled the invitations—about forty Nixon loyalists showed up. As the returns came in, Nixon walked from room to room with that serious, controlled excitement in him: "It's a sweep, you know—it's a sweep." He went into the bedroom to take a call from Governor Reagan. He came out saying, "He's all right, Ron is—it's a sweep in California too." Forty-four House seats went to the Republicans, more than he had predicted—and more than a few of those seats went Republican because of Nixon's campaigning. The band of loyalists at the Drake didn't feel like such minor-league conspirators anymore. Dick could go all the way.

## 4. WASHIN' DIRTY DISHES

"Collecting delegates is just like washin' dirty dishes," Peter O'Donnell said, one hand holding an imaginary dishmop, laboriously swabbing an imaginery dish in the other, "you gotta take 'em one by one." All eyes in the room, including Richard Nixon's, watched the Republican state chairman of Texas, who helped capture the 1964 Convention for Goldwater, finish his little pantomime: O'Donnell gently shook the water off the sparkling-clean dish and carefully stacked it on top of the other delegate dishes.

We were in Suite 31-A of the Waldorf Towers, the date January 7, 1967. The spacious rooms were once the home of Herbert Hoover, who had lived there until his death in 1964; Nixon recalled that as a U. S. Senator he came to call on Mr. Hoover here, and had great difficulty getting past the guard. Nixon had specifically asked for this suite over the first weekend of the new year for two days of meetings; he had come to know Mr. Hoover in Boys Club work, admired his stoic way of surviving ignominy and defeat to regain respect in the eyes of most Americans. In a speech after the former President's death, Nixon said Hoover would be remembered "more for what he was than what he did."

I was among the last to arrive. "This is Safire," Nixon said, "absolutely trustworthy, worked with us in '60. But," he added, half in jest, "watch what you say, he's a writer." I took this as an invitation to make notes of the meeting.

Some of the faces were familiar: Peter Flanigan, forty-one, with whom I'd worked in the '60 campaign; Bob Finch, forty-four, newly elected Lieutenant Governor of California (his margin of victory, exceeding Ronald Reagan's, had come as a stunning surprise to Nixon), as close to RN as a son; Tom Evans, thirty-six, from the law firm, who had been the administrative man on the '66 campaign. The faces I did not recognize were Jerry Milbank, forty-six, a fund-raiser for Goldwater with impeccable Wall Street credentials; Fred LaRue, thirty-eight, a soft-spoken Southerner, state chairman of the Mississippi Republicans; and Peter O'Donnell of the

dirty dishes simile, forty-two. It was the young group of old pros that Nixon, then fifty-four, wanted; the average age of the seven of us was thirty-nine.

"The purpose of this group," Nixon began, "is to begin planning now to win the nomination. It is important that we keep the existence of this group quiet, not only because of the press, but because we don't want to hurt the feelings of anybody we've left out." This added to a warm organizational feeling; we were the "inner circle" of one of the few men who could actually make it, and Nixon wanted us to know it.

"It is not the purpose of this group to help me on issues," he cautioned, which explained why Len Garment and Bob Ellsworth were not there. "On issues, very briefly, I think we can assume that the Vietnam war will have been ended by the 1968 election. Other issues not so sure of solution, however, include inflation, race, and crime. Johnson's ego, as illustrated by that episode with the portrait, could be an issue too." He moved away from this quickly; he knew what he wanted this group for, and it was not to advise him on matters on which they were inexpert.

"Let's look at the odds as of today.

"Romney is even money to get the nomination. He's got money; he's ahead in the polls, which is important to delegates; but he's never shown an ability to hit big-league pitching.

"Percy and Nixon are two to one. Percy has a good forum in Washington, and he's smart. But he won't have a delegate base, and there's the memory of the '60 platform fight. His problem is that Romney won't roll over and make way when the Eastern Establishment says, 'You're not smart enough for us.' Romney will surprise them—like Warren in '52, he'll hang in there all the way.

"Reagan is four to one. Rocky has no chance at all."

I would have given Rockefeller at least a long-shot chance and stretched the odds a bit on Percy, but Nixon's assessment was fairly close to that of most of the men there. We were more interested in his assessment of his own weakness.

"My biggest problem," Nixon concluded, "is 'Nixon can't win.'" That laid it on the line. Finch added, "If we could convince delegates that Dick could win—then he's in."

We discussed ways to build "winability." I suggested the "inevitability" theme, recalling how other leaders moved inexorably back to power after a period in the wilderness. Nixon pondered that possibility and then warned: "You can't repackage Nixon with PR. Maybe that's okay with a new man, but not with me. I'm a known quantity. That has its benefits—Julie's picture was on all the front pages because it was news.* But it has its drawbacks—the normal image-building won't work with me."

"There's always the dangerous route," said Flanigan, "the primaries."

* Julie Nixon had made her debut in society at the International Debutante Ball on December 30, 1966, escorted by David Eisenhower.

Nixon allowed as how the best way to knock Romney down in the polls was to remove his winner status by beating him in New Hampshire.

But that was a year away, and the nomination could be sewn up before the primaries. "We must stop Romney's bandwagon by showing some delegate strength," said LaRue. "Most delegates think all Nixon has is the South. He doesn't know we can break through in a state like Pennsylvania." The group did not need to be reminded of the "goal line stand" at a recent Governors' Conference when Romney tried to blitz then and there. Nixon men passed among the Governors advising them to stay loose, there was plenty of time to 1968, and we thought in 1967 that the nomination had very nearly been sewn up by Romney in 1966.

Where did that leave us now? "Some say," Nixon started—we all knew that what was coming had to be wrong, because Nixon's "some" and "others" never say anything right—"Some say I should do nothing, because if I try and fail, I could not be kingmaker. I disagree. You cannot be kingmaker unless you try to be king—that's what gets you the power to form the deadlock.

"If I were to do nothing, Romney would be nominated. Nobody could stop him in the Midwest. Whoever is running has to start running now, and this group of cynical idealists should be the first to realize it."

That was the word O'Donnell wanted to hear. "We have to have a flag," he said, "run it up, and go into business. Right now, it's somebody against nobody. We've got to start buttonholing delegates. We need a name, a few delegate-getters, an organizer—"

LaRue caught him up short. "Reagan could shoot us down in two minutes." Nixon nodded agreement, observing, "It's the reverse of '64, when the liberals could never get together." Finch said it was our top priority right away to get George Murphy and others to lean on Reagan not to split conservative strength by going for the nomination himself.

"Here's a different game plan," Finch said to Nixon. It was the first time I'd heard that football expression used in politics. "We could lay back and let Reagan be our stalking horse, just the way Rockefeller is using Romney." I saw a big flaw in that: "What if Romney offers Reagan the Vice Presidency—then you have the stalking horses running away with the wagon." "That's a danger," Finch admitted, "but we could offer Reagan the top spot on a silver platter in 1972 if we lost."

Nixon smiled and shook his head. "I'm glad you threw that idea out, and it might even work if Reagan would go for it, but he wouldn't. It's good for us to think the unthinkable, though."

The decision was made to pass the word that Nixon was running. "Don't give out any franchises," was the way he put it, "but get started contacting the power groups in each state."

Peter O'Donnell pressed for Nixon to name a chairman of this group, but I cautioned against it on the basis that it would soon get into print—as soon as there is a boss, there is a story. (Actually, I did not want to see it go to O'Donnell, because of his obvious Goldwater coloration.) Nixon

finessed the point by saying "Peter O'Donnell is the nonchairman of a nonexistent group." "The Brain Trust?" somebody kidded, and drew a sharp look from RN: "No, no help on the issues. That's something else. Stick to politics."

The specifics began to flow from the "go" signal. Who would be surfaced as the Nixon men? Maury Stans, Fred Seaton, Peter Flanigan, John Davis Lodge, Bob Ellsworth, with Pat Buchanan as press aide. Charley Rhyne to write a letter to "the citizens types." What about polling? We'd need two—one for a prestige name, another for internal use only. Where did we need media contacts? The New York *Times* and *Time* magazine—they were the toughest nuts to crack.

The meeting spilled over to the next day and the campaign seemed to pick up a tempo of its own. Targets were selected. When O'Donnell referred to a Texas politician as "a nut on Communism," Nixon replied evenly: "Go get him—he thinks I'm a nut on Communism." Should we float out a hint that Reagan will be our VP? "Hell, no," answered the most conservative man there, "talk left—Schafer or Percy." Most important: the campaign manager. Who would be out front, full-time, acceptable to the wide party spectrum?

Finch brought up the name of C. Gaylord Parkinson, a California obstetrician and politician who authored the "Eleventh Commandment" in bloody California primary fights: "Thou shalt not speak ill of another Republican." Too quickly, Nixon told Finch to call Herb Klein, his old press secretary who was then editor of the San Diego *Union*, to sound out Parky. (He was soon hired, but the chemistry wasn't right, and along came John Mitchell, whose story is told later.) Before the meeting broke up, just for kicks, Nixon went down the list of states and guessed at his delegate strength in each. There was a moment of tension as I added it up: we had 603 votes on the first ballot. Needed to nominate: 667.*

We had thought we had a fair chance to make it. After going over the state delegations one by one, we realized that Nixon was wrong about one thing—it was no case of even odds for Romney and two to one for us. We were in better shape than anybody—if only we could show Nixon was a winner.

The most important and gutsy decision Nixon then made about his personal plans was to do nothing. To a man, his advisers and staff urged him to capitalize on his 1966 victory by coming out in the open—speeches, appearances, tours, television interviews, the works. He said no: "Let Romney take the point." (In military tactics, the soldier "on the point" of a wedge is the most likely to be shot.) If Nixon had anything, it was a sense of timing, an instinct for the ebb and flow of public boredom in men seeking to pique the public's interest. He had been in the wilderness from 1963 through 1965; he was in the public eye again for a few months in

* On the first ballot at the Republican Convention of 1968, Nixon received 690 votes, and the pattern within each state was uncannily the way he had called it eighteen months before. He knew just where his strength was.

1966; now he would recede into the background again for a while, letting them come to him, traveling abroad and stocking up the anecdotes and expertise that would serve him well as primary time neared. Besides, he had a perverse confidence in George Romney: the Michigan Governor, he was sure, could not take the savaging that the press corps reserves for the front runner. Nixon was right on both counts: it is hard, in retrospect, to realize how much nerve it takes to run by not running, and to stick to that strategy for a solid six months as the pressure builds.

*Time* magazine told us it planned to do a cover story on Nixon in August 1967; the timing was right for us, and the cover might have launched Nixon's next phase into greater public exposure with the kind of boost he needed, but after climbing all over us and the rest of the political landscape, a *Time* editor suddenly pulled the plug—and told us there would be no cover. Nixon was irritated, though he took some pleasure in pointing out to us that he had told us *Time* would never do anything which might be good for Nixon. Then—to his surprise and ours—a stroke of good fortune came our way.

In a political campaign's early stages, it is most useful to know what political leaders are saying privately to reporters—"not for attribution" is the phrase of art. Somebody at Time-Life, who believed that *Time*'s preference for Nelson Rockefeller had prevailed over its editorial judgment, sent Nixon the raw file of correspondents' copy on the Nixon cover. Since it is seven years since then, and time wounds all heels—and because Nixon knew what these politicians were saying then ever since—it might be worth while to look at some of the judgments being expressed by political men who thought they were being anonymous.

Dwight Eisenhower told a "visitor" (Hugh Scott, later the Senate Minority Leader) that Nixon was the best grounded of all the hopefuls in foreign affairs, "but he's certainly being hurt by this 'they say' business." What did Ike mean? "They say he can't win."

A "high-ranking liberal Northeast Republican" (Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts) told a reporter "the stigma of being a loser still stays with him." With Nixon as the nominee, "it wouldn't be a contest in '68—it would be a giveaway."

A "conservative Western GOP Senator" (that was Peter Dominick of Colorado, and we needed his support) said, "He's the most qualified man, but can we win with a man who's lost twice?"

A "veteran GOP professional" (Ab Hermann, later Deputy Director of the Republican National Committee) said, not for attribution: "I can't explain it, but I don't like him."

On the other hand, Nixon discovered that some people were saying nice things behind his back: Republican Senator Thruston Morton of Kentucky said: "I think the guy's grown up. He's attained a sense of understanding he didn't have before. To put it bluntly, I like him more than I did in 1960."

Bryce Harlow, former Eisenhower aide, speechwriter and friend to many

on Capitol Hill, said, not for attribution: "Nixon is a party loyalist who has stepped up to the tough ones as well as the easy ones." (Soon after, Bryce was brought aboard.)

Besides revealing where some influential Republican figures stood—Everett Dirksen declared Nixon to be "kosher" but Melvin Laird leaked a poll showing Romney would do far better with Democratic voters—the *Time* file contained some helpful stimuli: "Nixon seems devoid of any ideas—and bold new concepts—that could capture the electorate's imagination." Note was made of that, along with this comment from Ronald Reagan's public relations firm: "The one thing that could rejuvenate Nixon would be color TV. In black and white he looks sinister with his black beard."

To have had Nixon, who needed the boost, on *Time*'s cover that fall would have been good, but it was even better to know who our friends were. (Few of us would afterward tell anybody in "group journalism" anything not for attribution that would be embarrassing to have come to the attention of our colleagues.) Certainly the leaking by the *Time* employee was reprehensible—breaking faith with sources and harming the press's ability to carry out its necessary functions—but as the recipient of the leak from the publication put it, "The shoe has been on the other foot often enough." I remember thinking that if I were working for *Time*, I would be furious with the disloyal partisan who gave away corporate secrets to suit that employee's own purposes. Even now, I wonder what I would have done, if I were they, to plug the leak.

Toward the end of 1967, Nixon began talking to people on the telephone without bothering to say hello, and the campaign tempo picked up. Nixon had to lose his loser image in the primaries, so he pretended to enjoy campaigning and plunged into New Hampshire. The phenomenon began that was to continue all that spring of 1968: the pullout of other candidates. George Romney looked at the polls showing him getting less than 10 per cent of the vote against Nixon, and announced he was out of the race. This news was brought to Nixon on the campaign trail by Buchanan, who pulled the candidate into an aircraft's tiny men's room to get away from reporters. Nixon reacted by shaking his head and chiding Buchanan for not checking out the report: "It's not true, you know, Pat. Somebody's kidding." In a sense, he was right—but the man doing the kidding around was Nelson Rockefeller, who was acting as if the starting gate were a revolving door. On March 23, back from campaigning in Wisconsin, Nixon called me to ask why I thought Rockefeller had just pulled out of the race again. Before I could reply, he said, "It was the polls. He has the same figures we have for Oregon's primary. Back in February, they were Nixon thirty-five, Rocky thirty-five, Reagan eight, and just last week they were Nixon forty-seven, Rocky twenty-six, Reagan three. It's all over for him. The only one who can stop us is Reagan." Next day he called again to say, "It would be better for me not to do anything controversial for the time being. I don't want to get into the crossfire between LBJ and